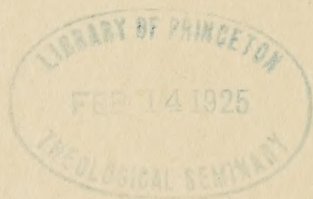


# CARDINALS OF FAITH

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OSWALD W. S. McCALL



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Samuel, 1885-  
Cardinals of faith





# Cardinals of Faith

Brief Studies for a Time of Groping

BY

OSWALD W. S. McCALL

Minister of  
First Congregational Church of Berkeley, California

WITH AN

INTRODUCTION

BY

DR. JOHN WRIGHT BUCKHAM

Professor of Christian Theology in Pacific School of Religion.



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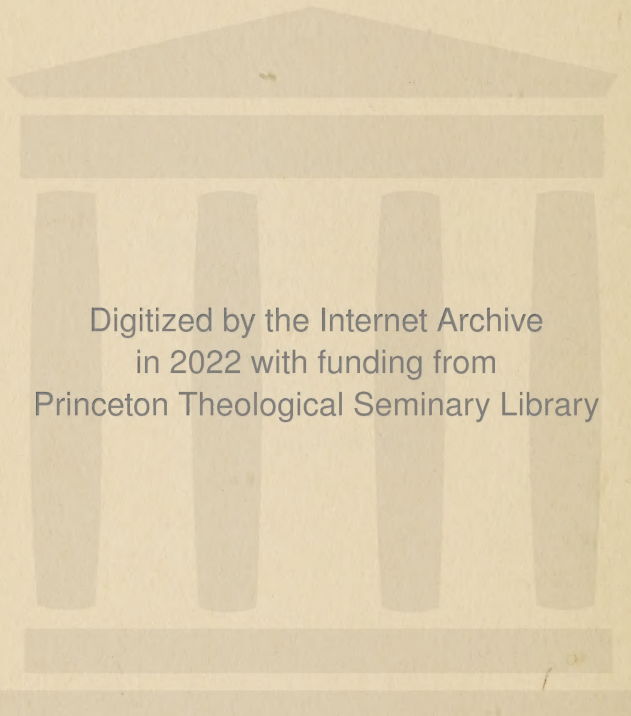
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IF, PERCHANCE,  
YOU SHOULD FIND  
WISDOM HERE, OR GOODLINESS,  
OR TENDER DEVOTION  
TO THINGS THAT ARE BEST,  
UNCOVER THE HEAD  
FOR YOU WILL HAVE MET

*My Mother*



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## FOREWORD

MOST of the contents of this volume was prepared in response to an invitation to deliver a series of addresses before the Northern California Congregational Conference at Asilomar, California, in the fall of 1922. They were received all too generously, the Conference expressing its desire that they be printed. My own congregation, whose unusual wealth of heart and mind is so provocative of new visions to a preacher, also listened to them, and a request coming that they be heard at Pomona College, Claremont, California, some of them were repeated there in February, 1923. On each occasion judgment that I hardly felt free to ignore was cordial enough to wish for them a wider audience. I have felt encouraged to add certain chapters, and to conclude with a forward-looking word, which I have ventured to term "Progressional." The "Cardinals" do not pretend to do much more than glance at certain great truths of religion, any attempt at extensive survey being obviously not made. Yet it is to be hoped that even such brief glances, taken as they are in the light of the

past and the present, will commend themselves as having seen not untruly. Recollection of the purposes for which the material was first prepared will explain the form of public address it wears, which could scarcely have been changed without extensive rewriting. From no one has encouragement been so discriminating and so helpful as from Dr. John Wright Buckham, professor of Christian theology in the Pacific School of Religion, Berkeley. In readily acceding to my request to look over the "Cardinals," he allowed me to benefit beyond measure by his suggestions, placing not simply me in his debt, but also all who may chance to read what follows. And may that reading leave the Eternal Things at least a little larger, a little dearer, and life a little holier.

OSWALD W. S. McCALL.

## INTRODUCTION

THESE arrow flights into the heart of truth, directed by a clear eye from a well-bent bow, need no introduction. They convey their own desired message in their own rare manner. Such few words as are perhaps needed have to do chiefly with the bowman.

The Rev. Oswald W. S. McCall, of Scotch-Irish stock, came to America by way of Australia, where he was pastor of Methodist churches for fifteen years, service abroad with the Australian troops, chiefly as preacher and lecturer, increasing in him that deeper knowledge of abiding realities and of men, which was one of the few compensative by-products of the Great War. He left Australia with his family in 1921, not knowing whither he went, except that it was to wide-welcoming and opportunity-abundant America, and for purposes of Christian service. He was intercepted on his way to whatever field of service might need him by the First Congregational Church of Berkeley, California, which called him to its pastorate in January, 1922, under circumstances which have seemed both to them and to him

too spiritually significant to be of a merely accidental nature.

Our time has its own problems and its own preferences. Preaching has been in more or less successful practice a very long time—too long for many of the children of this generation, who have quite lost interest in it. Yet it still has its age-long power and fascination—when the man in the pulpit is a true preacher. The people of Berkeley have caught in the accents of the voice of this spokesman of the gospel a note of veracity, of inspiration, and of human sympathy which has won them with an ever-stronger and more widely felt appeal.

The University of California, Stanford University, and Pomona College have all recognized in Mr. McCall a man with a message which commands both heart and intellect, and to their needs he has given himself with unstinted response. Pacific School of Religion conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity in May, 1924.

For such as understand the true and inexhaustible prerogatives of preaching these are sermons. For those who do not, they are simply reverent and courageous ventures in the realm of religious truth—truth which has to do directly and controllingly with life. At the same time, it seems to me that they are full

of a well-concealed but vital and balanced theology.

Their unusual quality—which only those who have listened to Doctor McCall can fully understand—lies, I take it, in their complete freedom as well as grace of thought and expression, blended with a fine sense of the values of the revelation of the Divine Spirit to the men of good will in the past; their kinship with the true literature of the spirit, old and new, both in allusion and in their own texture; their insight into the deeper realities of life, and, above all, in their faith in God, as revealed in Christ, and their sympathetic knowledge of the human heart and mind. These qualities will make the volume a source of light and help to very many who are troubled in the midst of present-day doubt and confusion.

There are here, to quote lines of Francis Thompson which are often upon the lips of Doctor McCall, “the drift of pinions,” which, “would we hearken, beats at our own clay-shuttered doors.”

JOHN WRIGHT BUCKHAM.





# G O D

## I

ATHEISM is not to-day the troubler of the human intellect. Sober minds, perhaps more especially since the coming of the scientific habit of mind, in most cases feel that it would be something like intellectual flippancy to say there is no God. Our increasing knowledge of this universe-machine may have dazed us with the whirr of its wheels, lost us in the complexity of its labyrinths, and left us breathless in astonishment and awe before its finesse, its delicate balances, its perfect adaptations; but I take it our knowledge has in no sense led us to say there is no Almighty Machinist.

The universe is a pyramid pointing to God. Near Cairo, the visitor to the pyramids sees them built in layers, and one of the pyramids still retains a little of the alabaster that once faced them all; crowning the apex, the alabaster still points to the sky. Is there not something like this in the impressive testimony of the universe to God? First, the mineral base, and upon it the vegetable, and then the animal, each "layer" narrowing in extent as the pyramid

rises; and then the human, and higher still the supermen, prophets and geniuses and seers; above them, the few demigods, as Moses, Confucius, Zoroaster, Buddha, Mohammed; and last, nearest to heaven, the crown and glory of the whole, the alabaster apex, *Christ*. The testimony of the pyramid is one; each part is eloquent, but what shall we say of the whole?

The intellect has its demands; less and less are they likely to be satisfied by atheism.

This is so of the soberer mind. There is abroad a good deal of easy and pert assertion of unbelief which is really no such thing. A man's faith is like a harp-string; relax it by careless living and it will thrill with no great music. But let some discipline fall, bringing the silver cord taut with seriousness, and in that serious hour it will be found that it was not in truth broken at all, but suffering from laxity. A man who carries in his heart a broken faith cannot be pert about it. Professor Clifford, having definitely resigned faith in Christianity, pictured himself amid the glory of a spring sunrise, "gazing on the empty heaven stretched over a soulless earth," and realizing with a sense of utter loneliness that "the Great Companion was dead."

This sort of doubt is very different from the ready denials we meet, but this is the only

sort we can respect. For no one can be an atheist indeed without much reflection; but to reflect upon the significance of atheism must shadow the soul with horror and despair. Respect a denial such as that; but when you find a man retailing his denials with glib assurance, and rebutting your faith with a satisfaction that at times almost suggests gaiety, be neither alarmed at his attacks nor too hopeful of carrying the day against him. His trouble is not intellectual; it is moral. Either he is a child who, not yet having grown to the dignity of a man, cannot realize the solemn significance of his denials, or else he is a man who carries somewhere a false emphasis in his life, and so is dismantling that dignity and incapacitating his seriousness. For no man can *lightly* say, "There is no God!" without, by his lightness, publishing the hidden flippancy and barrenness of his soul, as if one came laughing to you and said, "*Your mother is dead!*" Though it were true, yet the laughter would be an awful exposure of the one capable of it.

## II

But for the majority atheism is not the trouble to-day. The people are not preyed upon by denials of God so much as by carica-

tures of him. Our business is not the convincing men of the existence of the Almighty so much as the straightening out of their ideas about him. It matters what men believe about God, for their own lives will be affected by it.

We are embarrassed with gods. There are tribal gods enthroned by the nations, making favorites and awarding priority; there are denominational gods, with special taste for ritual, or independence, or fervor, or dignity, or what not. There are gods dressed up like clergymen, and gods clanking swords and spurs in the manner of Prussians; there are gods who are professors in theology, bending with feverish interest over our disputes about whether the "t" should be crossed or the "i" dotted first; there are gods with ribbons around their necks like unto pet poodles, to be fed on pious tidbits, spasmodically embraced in paroxysms of religious sentiment, and generally carried about and fondled as quite harmless and pretty adornment and entertainment.

We have gods more than we can number, and that is the pity of it, and some of them are fearfully and wonderfully made.

Contrast the sublime impression of God left with us by Dante when he pictures himself gazing, in "suspense and motionless," into "that abyss of radiance, clear and lofty,"

staggering under the weight of his own conception of God and saying, "O speech! how feeble and how faint art thou, to give conception birth!"<sup>1</sup>

## III

When we speak of God we mean to convey, of course, the Christian conception of him: the God of Mohammed could not satisfy one who has conceived of the higher God of Jesus. "God is Light," pure, warm, outstreaming with health. This is his character, revealed full-orbed in Jesus, but rays of which have come through many sources since God first began to reveal himself among men. For God has not withheld knowledge of himself, of his nature and ways, shining in many ages through numberless intellects until we are not left destitute. The light, truly, is through colored media, but it is light, and from above, and it is sufficient to read by. No doubt Scripture is right: "No man hath seen God at any time"—not the undimmed beam, insufferable. Yet also: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," says Jesus; aye, in a dimmer sense, he that hath seen the product of any elevated character or of any clear and honest brain "hath seen" glimmerings of the Father.

<sup>1</sup> Canto XXXIII.

Ralph Connor concludes his *Sky Pilot* thus: "For often during the following years, as here and there I came upon one of those that companied with us in those Foothill days, I would catch a glimpse in word and deed and look of him we called, first in jest, but afterward with true and tender feeling we were not afraid to own, our *Sky Pilot*." If there were nothing to tell about God after so long, we should well question if there were any God to tell about; if nothing of the Great Companion could be glimpsed among men, we might well deny that there had ever been companionship. But now do we believe that in "sundry times and in divers manners" the knowledge of God has come, because he has ever deigned to be the "rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

Let us try to pluck some of the fruits of man's long thinking and experience and set them out before us.

#### IV

We do not conceive of God as blind energy, nor as mere characterless intellect; he is a Person. Many of those who dispute this are denying something which we are not asserting. Personality is not physical, it is spiritual. "Perhaps no better service for theology could

be performed by the pulpit," writes Professor Buckham in his illuminating work, *Personality and the Christian Ideal*, "than to have every minister the world round stand up and say: 'God is a Person; he is not an Individual. A person is a free, self-conscious, moral spirit.'" "But," as another has wisely warned us, "when we ascribe personality to God we do not mean to imply that he has the limitations of personality as we know it, but merely that personality . . . just because it is the highest thing we know, is that something from the analogy of which we can derive the *least inadequate* conception that is possible of the Divine."<sup>1</sup> No personality is known much beyond its fragmentary externals; a man's works are the least part of him, though his character is expressed in them all. It is no wonder if the deeps of the Master Personality remain unsounded, though what we know of him is real. Who knows all that was Livingstone; yet who doubts that the essentials of Livingstone are known?

## V

But now *where* is this Person, and in what world may we find him? "I will tell you where

<sup>1</sup> *Immortality*, p. 79. Streeter.

God is," said one of the Christian Fathers, "when you tell me where God is not." There are two truths about God which every man will be the richer for apprehending. They are not novel to the Christian thinker, yet they seem to require stating yet again.

One of these is the *Transcendence* of God: God is greater than his universe.

Years have gone since some of us read De Quincy's "Dream Vision of Infinite Space," but perhaps we have not forgotten his picture of how "God called up from dreams a man into the vestibule of heaven, saying 'Come thou hither, and see the glory of my house.' And to the servants that stood around his throne he said: 'Take him, and undress him from his robes of flesh; cleanse his vision, and put a new breath into his nostrils; arm him with sail-broad wings for flight. Only touch not with any change his human heart—the heart that weeps and trembles.' Then, in charge of a mighty angel, the man swung out into infinite space, flying amid worlds of life and wildernesses of death, with towering constellations upon one hand and upon the other, suns and planets that built themselves into gates and arches and stairs, depths that yawned unfathomable, heights that reared insurmountable. Suddenly, as thus they rode



from infinite to infinite—suddenly, as thus they tilted over abysmal worlds, a mighty cry arose—that systems more mysterious, worlds more billowy, other heights and other depths—were dawning, were nearing, were at hand. Then the man stopped, sighed, shuddered, and wept. His overladen heart uttered itself in tears: and he said: ‘Angel, I will go no farther, for the spirit of man aches under this infinity. Insufferable is the glory of God’s house. Let me lie down in the grave, that I may find rest from the persecutions of the Infinite; for end, I see, there is none.’ And from all the listening stars that shone around issued one choral chant: ‘Even so it is; angel, thou knowest that it is; end there is none, that ever yet we heard of.’ ‘End is there none?’ the angel solemnly demanded. ‘And is this the sorrow that kills you?’ But no voice answered, that he might answer himself. Then the angel threw up his glorious hands to the heaven of heavens, saying: ‘End is there none to the universe of God! Lo! ALSO THERE IS NO BEGINNING.’ ”

It is worth calling back this picture of infinity that we may awe our spirits with the measurelessness of God! It might help to check certain unseemly tendencies in our modern religious life. If the boisterous laughter of Robert Ingersoll helped, by the truth that

was in it, to sting us out of our artificial interpretations of the Bible, the soberer agnosticism of Huxley contributed much toward our emancipation from parochial ideas of God. We are not all free yet, however. It was with a scorn too fine to realize the indifferent propriety of his words that an observant "man in the street" commented impatiently upon the way some religious folk have of comporting themselves before the Infinite: "Why, they pretty well call him by his first name!" The reproof is not unjust.

After we have gathered all we may of Him who has written syllables of himself in every heart that has cared enough to seek him, and in every intellect that has counted him worth its strength, we must return to say, "Lo, these are but the outskirts of his ways: and how small a whisper do we hear of him!"

The transcendence of God must always signify a necessary truth in agnosticism. "The reality back of appearances," Herbert Spencer assures us with a finality we cannot share, "is and ever must remain unknown." But do we know nothing of the heavens because we do not know all? On the other hand, our claim to know something is not a pretense that we know everything; we still go exploring in the starry deeps, glad of every new syllable of

knowledge we collect, in reverence before the brightness and the marvel, lured ever by the abysmal unknown which we persistently ask to know even if in dazed moments we wonder if it be unknowable. But the starry heavens are dead; God we believe is living, and a Person. In our agnosticism let us not fail to discern between comprehension and apprehension, for if the first is important, the second is life. Whatever God is, the testimony of the ages is that the spirit of man may apprehend him who outranges the intellect—may apprehend him and by thus finding him may find also that here alone does it fulfill its own self. "This is life eternal that they may know Thee!" But this knowledge is first experimental rather than intellectual, it is devotion rather than definition. What myriads live by apprehending electric energy who never even begin to comprehend it!

## VI

But this Transcendence of God is accompanied by another truth, without which we should be left crushed and orphaned by sheer infinity. This other truth brings God near again, and redeems us with hope of communion. It is the *Immanence* of God; God is inherent in his universe.

Fairbairn speaks of the people of India believing in a God, who, though impersonal, continually impersonates himself in everything. Impersonality is not the Christian conception, but impersonation is closer to it. At least the poets, those seers who "clothe the sublimest thought in the language of the gods," have thought so. "I kiss God's finger-tip in the spring flower; I feel his presence in the morning's glory. With the Persian I kiss my hand to him in the star, my head rests on his breast in a knoll of violets and clover: not on *it* but on *him*; not '*It* is beautiful,' but '*he* is beautiful.'" So writes E. P. Powell. But George MacDonald apprehends similarly the proximity of God when he sings:

"A voice is in the wind I do not know;  
A meaning on the face of the high hills  
Whose utterance I cannot comprehend;  
A something is behind them; that is God."

And when Goethe speaks of nature "as the living, visible garment of God" we are reminded of a seamless dress that once in Galilee distributed healing virtue to such as touched it; beneath "this living visible garment" is "a presence that disturbs" us, a Person responsive, warm, redemptive, whom not a few have found.

Those who remember the boyhood book, *The Flamingo Feather*, with its entrancing picture of adventures among the Indians of Florida, in the sixteenth and seventeenth century, will recall how the young hero of the story, a French youth, Rene de Veaux, became the chieftain of an Indian tribe. To that tribe he became in some measure both immanent and transcendent, inasmuch as he was on the one hand actual and accessible among them, infusing them and their customs with his spirit till they caught the flavor of him and were animated by him; but at the same time and on the other hand, being superior, he was not limited by them, their manners or traditions, continuing distinct, and in many of his powers, inaccessible. These two qualities of superiority and indwelling cannot be arbitrarily distinguished one from another; they are a natural combination in one personality. Any father is both immanent among his children and yet transcendent. Pass again to the eternal Spirit and intensify this immanence and this transcendence a myriad times until this twofold truth of the Great Personality be somewhat conceived—the untrammelled supremacy of the Absolute, and the inescapable closeness of the Omnipresent.

“Whither shall I go from thy spirit?” cries

the old psalmist. "Whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me." This is immanence.

## VII

What is God like?—not in form, for he has none that we are able to conceive any more than we can conceive the form of our own essential selves, which also are spirit. But what is he like? Persons have character; is God something like Milton's Satan, magnificent and terrible, but heartless?

Though one need not lack color even to such a picture, there is one supreme denial of it—the human heart. Suspect the thing to which the human heart at its best will not answer. Keener than logic, unbaffled by mystery, contemptuous of the spurious, the *intuitions* read the face of Truth at a glance. Send out your missionaries to tell the nations that God is like Satan; produce your evidence—suffering, sin, disease—and, though hearing all, the heart of the race will answer: "I cannot understand, I cannot prove you wrong; but this I know, by

something deeper than logic, and by the swift-rising scorn in me: it is darkly and blindly false!" On the other hand, take the brave and bewitching picture of Jesus to men for their judgment. Say to them, "Look upon this Face and answer if God shines here." You know there is not a healthy heart the world over but will salute the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ! But that is because the universal heart instinctively realizes that God is good. Rather deny God altogether than deny his goodness. Paul folds his arms and gazes into the face of Nero, and through him into the face of the entire Roman power. What can it all do to awe one whose moral integrity makes him a tower before his immoral persecutors? Martyrs die triumphant through sheer moral sovereignty. An immoral God would be despised by his creatures, and rightly, for he would be less than they. No tyranny of mere power could conquer one who, though feebler, knew himself greater, because goodness is greater than power.

## VIII

But do not enervate the idea of goodness by making it mere spineless benevolence. Goodness is not limited to mildness. When Jesus weeps, or declines to condemn an erring woman,

we are quick to feel his goodness; has he ceased to be good because with vibrating indignation he cries: "Woe unto the world because of offenses"? "God is light"; is light good? It cleanses, sweetens, invigorates. "Let the light shine upon your body; it is health," says the doctor. "Let the light into your soil; it is nourishment," says the farmer. Precisely; but what do the *bacilli* think about it, to whom the light is death? Any conception of the goodness of God which tends to make him indifferent to sin and moral disease is simply wanton cheapening of the idea of goodness.

Discovery of the Infinite Love has had the effect in some quarters of besmearing the Deity with a sentimentality that degenerates his attitude toward his creature to the level of doting but feeble and characterless femininity. Scripture, whilst abundant in mercy and hope, gives no justification for our enervated idea of God; neither does nature, nor history, nor conscience. These are all garments of God, bearing the peculiarities of his person, and certainly they bear no testimony that their Divine Wearer is a mere benignant anemia.

If, long ago, Jehovah was pictured as lifting himself up in gloomy terror to hurl headlong his foes, trampling them underfoot and gnashing his teeth above them in irreconcilable



wrath, we must not allow our indignant reaction from such a picture to miss the truth *at the back of it*. Still "our God is a consuming fire" toward some, or you have emptied his holiness of meaning; still there is something in him to fear, or he is an inanity that no one will love; still he rules with iron hand, or no one in the universe is safe. In some quarters the God of love is so portrayed as to become as unnatural as a picture without a shadow and as insipid as a diet of saccharine. One is reminded of some of those statues that have come down to us from the great ages of art, but which, more from the usage of uncouth hands than from the passage of time, have lost mouth and nose and eyes and cheeks and are become quite featureless. When love dwells intelligent in the midst of power, as in Jesus, one respects it and is subdued. But when uncouth hands strike the *character* from the face of God, leaving only an unmeaning and unvaried smudge of "love," the world turns languidly away and goes after its devils to find something interesting. The enlightened theological Canaan we hoped we were journeying to has turned out to be largely a land flowing with sentiment and syrup, and somehow we almost sigh for the wilderness where the frowning aspect and the sting of the hail did remind

us that someone cared if we did wrong—if it were only enough to punish us!

The love of God is not a capacity for infinite yielding, but it is like the evening softness of great mountains, where the softness reposes amidst granite strength. Unless this is realized the goodness of God can mean little either to us or to the nation. For God must be allowed to be morally in earnest and not a trifler.

## IX

Here, then, is the ever-present Person, perfect in goodness, witnessing to himself in us and in all that is. But still another question urges itself: What is the *raison d'être* of God's creation? Behind this various universe and behind the fact of human being, a provocative *Why?* lifts up itself.

"Why did you paint that picture? It cost you much time and patience. Why? For applause? For money?"

"I do not despise the applause, yet that is not the reason," replied the artist. "I need the money, yet neither is that the reason. I had to save my soul." God is the First Artist and is urged by his own nature: the heavens are his canvas and he paints in worlds. But reflect that God is a person and that persons

need fellowship; especially must this be so of him who is the Supreme Person and the First Lover. Again, there is the urge of God's own nature, the urge to fellowship, the imperious urge of love. In Scripture and on the rocks God has told the same story: the crown of creation is personality. The universe has sweated to produce it; by endless selection and labor it has provided a companion for God. To raise questions of possible companionships elsewhere does not alter the truth of them here. With all its imperfections human personality can give devotion to God and receive him, and not be complete apart from him. How profound, we may remark, is the responsibility of any soul in refusing God the communion demanded by God's own nature! For if man has himself become a person, and if he is built to find God and have him, realizing his dignity and happiness in him, it is deprivation to God and it is disaster to man for anything to prevent a steady growth in reciprocity between human personality and divine. God needs man, and ultimately every man must learn that it is only God who can be of satisfaction to him. But here we see that God, by all that he has made, principally by man, reveals his hunger for fellowship. Such need can be satisfied only by love, which, in the nature of

it, cannot be commanded, may be withheld, and must always be voluntary.

This, then, is the picture: God, essentially personal, infinitely great, thrillingly present, robustly good, hungering for fellowship.

## X

And now one comes to the supreme climax of the subject, the matter that concerns us most and which is capable of being missed, though we should possess all the furniture of definition and correct views about the Divine Being. It is this:

*How are we to achieve the experimental, personal knowledge of God, which is not made up of intellectual opinions but of spiritual conviction and fellowship?*

God is the Master Truth, and if any man is asking, Pilate-like, "What is truth?" let such a man be warned of Pilate's attitude.

In the first place, his temper was wrong, being contemptuous, angry, whereas except a man be converted from scorn and pride and become as a little child, he shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of truth.

In the second place, Pilate's life was wrong, being place-loving, cowardly, irreligious. No man can weave a net of logic with his intellect

and catch truth as a fowler catches a bird. Assets of character are necessary. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." "Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice." It is as well to recognize this. It was possible for the Roman to have Jesus Christ stand actually before him and yet miss his value. What had Pilate in him that could read the excellencies of Christ? You desire knowledge of God? And think you no preliminaries of character are needful for such a quest? Beware lest, on a day when you complain that God is unknowable, someone retort: "Sir, thou hast nothing to draw with—and the well is deep."

In the third place the skeptical Roman, having propounded his question, straightway "went out." Brusque termination of the subject may suit a supercilious temper; it does not permit the discovery of truth. All the learning in the world will not compensate for cavalier treatment of the things of God, nor save such a man from being bankrupt of faith to the end. Be advised to cultivate patience and expectant persistence. It is required in every other study; why not in the study of God? Be patient, changes will yet take place within yourself, brought about by experience of living, which, if you are worthy, may give

you keys to mysteries that are locked to-day. As has been well said, truth must be born again in every individual heart ere it can exert power in that life. But this sort of thing is not for the slammer of doors, nor for him who completes instead of suspending his judgment when puzzled in the presence of great questions.

There is no question greater than this: How may knowledge of God become a conviction and a potency within us?

Illingworth<sup>1</sup> treated this illuminatingly years ago. All knowledge, he reminded us, is a process, or the result of a process. Moreover, even the simplest knowledge, that which comes through the senses, does not come without an active exercise of all the three functions of our personality—thought, emotion, and will—though the constant, common use of our ability to see, hear, feel, may have become so automatic as to appear involuntary. In realms of deeper knowledge, such as those into which the scientist enters, again our whole personality must cooperate in knowing, and little will be learned without emotion and will, enthusiasm and perseverance.

This is truer still in knowing persons. We usually know of them an aspect, only—social,

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<sup>1</sup> Personality, Human and Divine, Lecture V.

commercial, artistic. Love or reverence sometimes tempts us deeper, but in proportion to the depth and greatness of the person or character in question is the difficulty of really coming to know him. To know a man as he is—his true motives, the secret springs of his conduct, the measure of his abilities, the explanation of his inconsistencies, the dominant principles of his inner life—this is often a work of years, and one in which our own character and conduct play quite as important a part as our understanding. We all find that self-revelation is possible only to another for whom one has affinity. Plato, the spiritual philosopher, saw more profoundly into Socrates than could Xenophon, Socrates' companion in arms. Though sleeping under the same stars, what could the careless soldier know of Socrates?

But when we speak of knowledge of God, knowledge of that pure and uncreated Person, how shall the unholy know the Holy One, or the worldly know that which is spiritual, or the self-centered know him who is Love? Such is the drift of Illingworth's thought.

Knowledge of God, conviction that God is, sympathetic and interpretative affinity with him—these things are not the achievement of a day, but they ripen as a process. Neither are they to be won without attention to one's

own character. Reverence, the will to believe, hope, patience, all are necessary, and so is action.

*Action*—this is the note that may well close this discussion. It is the note struck by that rugged doubter, Carlyle, in his chapter, “The Everlasting Yea.” It is not surprising that in that chapter wherein he insists that Conduct is the prelude to Conviction, wherein he says, “Doubt of any sort cannot be removed except by action,” and writes in italics, “Do the duty that lies nearest thee”; it is not surprising that in that chapter he is able to turn with scorn upon the skepticisms of Voltaire and cry: “Is the God present, felt in my own heart, a thing which Herr von Voltaire will dispute out of me; or dispute into me? . . . Feel it in thy heart, and then say whether it is of God! This is Belief; all else is opinion—for which latter, whoso will, let him worry and be worried.”

But such magnificent belief comes on the wide moors of Action, not in the artificially lit and heated cloisters of Thought, where Faith withers for lack of exercise. Think, in the name of Heaven, but *walk* as you think!



## PRAAYER

### I

NEHEMIAH was too serious a man for us to suspect him of covert mockery, and yet in the account of his rebuilding of the Holy City, when he was beset by enemies bent on undoing his work, he gives utterance to these significant words: "We made our prayer unto our God, *and set a watch.*" He asks God for help and then proceeds carefully to lay his own very practical plans to help himself, posting sentinels upon the walls.

Unfortunately, some of us find it only too easy, in these days in which so many things are superficially different from his, to listen to his account of what he did with such a smile as is provoked by a spectacle of incredible naïveté, or else with that understanding sarcasm which thinks it detects in him the same attitude, tired, cynical, knowing, that talks religion with its tongue in its cheek. "We made our prayer—appearances demand it, don't you know? It is the custom and, who knows?—there might just chance to be some benefit we do not pretend to suspect. But

there is one thing we *can* trust—our own right arm; we'll set a watch. 'God helps those who—help themselves!'

And yet you will not say that it is either Bible teaching or common sense that God will help those who refuse to help themselves. "Give us this day our daily bread," is our prayer; but "if any would not work, neither should he eat," we are warned. Nehemiah is neither a simpleton, unable to see that his trust is really in the "watch" and not in the "prayer," nor a mocker, well aware of the value of the sentinels but indulging a tilt at an outgrown faith. He was simply one of those sane old Hebrews who had learned—a good deal more than some of his modern critics—the divine art of keeping his feet firmly planted upon the earth while his lungs inhaled the pure airs of heaven. With what puckered disdain would any one of them have surveyed the astonishing examples of *crazeology* we could offer, ranging all the way from a clod-like materialism that has no eyes to see the sky, up to filmy religiosity that floats so near to heaven it cannot come to earth! Nehemiah would find no difficulty in seeing that God's help and self-help must be united to make prayer. Perhaps we shall be able to show that both are necessary and are not contradictory.

## II

I want to lift out of this incident two persons and to invite you to watch their relationship one with another as we make our inquiry concerning prayer.

There is God; and there is Nehemiah.

Personality is spirit, and here are two personalities. All prayer is between persons. When the disputing mothers presented themselves with request before Solomon, or when the people of the United States petition their President, on both sides of the supplication stand persons. One does not attempt to supplicate anything else.

Consider, then, these two persons, Man and his Maker. Each inhabits a world of law. The spirit of Man, dwelling in his body, is the best analogy we have of the Eternal Spirit's dwelling in the universe.<sup>1</sup>

Both the body of a man and the universe of God are ordered by a regime of inexorable law, and this it is that constitutes one of the most grievous problems of prayer. We know exactly the conditions and limitations of a man's body; any physiologist will prophesy what will happen if you cut a nerve or touch the eye-ball; let a wound open the flesh, and nature will

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<sup>1</sup>See J. R. Illingworth, *Divine Immanence*, Chapter III.

proceed to healing in a manner which can be predicted to exactitude, and which will be the same as in the case of a million million wounds suffered by our race. Everything has its own laws, and what can the spirit of man do to alter them? Can he defy gravitation, or the nature of fire, or the need for food, and survive? The spirit is his personality, but so long as it is in the body, must it not submit to the body's laws? It is the law for his lungs to breathe; can he alter it? He does not wish to blush when embarrassed, but it is the law for his blood to flow, hastening to the brain when it is shocked; can he change the law? Likewise, God is immanent, truly, in his Universe, but you remember Omar's depressing lines:

“And that inverted Bowl we call the Sky,  
Whereunder crawling cooped we live and die,  
Lift not thy hands to It for help—for It  
Rolls impotently on as thou or I.”

Even if God is able to affect the universe of law, is he likely to do so merely because we pray? Do you realize what it means to interrupt a universe? Somewhere in the paralyzing recesses of space there plunges at incredible speed, as I speak, a vast world of blinding incandescence. We call it Halley's Comet, and who knows what adventures attend its pro-

longed career amidst the myriad, wheeling, flaming inhabitants of God's bewildering universe? And yet, however proudly this courser of the skies may shake its burning mane and strike bright stardust into a long trail from its fleeing hoofs, and seem untamable, resistless, in the glory of its going—yet, without faltering, unhastening, the strong hand of Law is upon the rein; the great comet is controlled, will turn upon the bit as a chariot turns in its course, and those of us who live in 1986 will sit like Romans in the Coliseum and watch it come again, and go. Will prayer alter that?

Somewhere on the mountains the snows are melting, and on the plains flooded rivers are devastating the country. Let us pray that the snows shall cease to melt. "No," says someone, "that is not feasible; rather let us begin earlier and pray that the snows may not fall so thickly in the winter." But that will mean a change of wind, a reduction of evaporation, a control of sun-spots, a control of the forces behind the sun-spots, and behind them—"God can do it." But what sort of a God would he be to play with his universe like that?

What are we to conclude? Not that God does not love, but that he is unable, having shut himself in? Is prayer, therefore, futile?

## III

Take up our analogy of man being immanent in his body, and therefore inhabiting a world of law which he cannot change. There is something more than immanence; it is transcendence.

Human personality is not a slave in fetters. He inherits a system which he is able to direct to his own abounding benefit.

“Man has harnessed the lightning to his will,  
And spanned the ocean’s breadth with bows of steel;  
He has made the universe his mill,  
And set the winds to work to drive his wheel.”

That which is heavier than air should fall, but man sits upon it in the clouds. Though he is naturally a slow-moving animal, he has learned to outstrip the ostrich and the wild wind. Though his voice is feeble, he has made it to be heard across a continent; though his eyes are dull he has shown them how to see through solids. He pounds with heavier hammers than that of Thor; he carries vaster mountains than Atlas; the thunderbolts he hurls make playthings of the terrors of Jove. He outdoes the labors of Hercules, turning the rivers to nourish the desert, chasing the ocean and reclaiming the land, everywhere placing his strong hands upon the laws of nature to show he does not

cringe and simper, but stands up and uses them. Some laws he controls by using higher law; some unexpected results he gets by achieving new combinations, of which the variety seems endless. In the realm of his own body he never lifts a hand without overruling the law of gravitation. Thus it is with the personality of man.

Passing again to the Master Personality, there is an ancient chain of questions which has always challenged answer: "He that planted the ear shall he not hear? He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He that teacheth man knowledge, shall not he know?" Shall we not add: He that giveth man control, shall not he govern?

By every wonder of the twentieth century we are able to proclaim: Personality is first and greatest. God is transcendent, personality always is. When God and man meet, and man is suppliant, rearrangements of a universe are not necessary in order to answer his need. Even we, though so dim in knowledge of the Almighty's ways, can conceive of methods whereby he might work. God is Lord in his own universe, and is able to answer according to his will without derangement and dislocation of a single thing that helps to hold together the myriad worlds which he has made.

## IV

What then—a blank check? A moment's reflection will correct such an idea. The relationship is not that of a man and a limitless but characterless treasury. Prayer is not an Aladdin's lamp. The relationship, as we have repeatedly said, is between Persons, and profound significance attaches here. Persons have character, and character must not be presumed upon. When Herodias supplicated Herod for John the Baptist's head he ought to have repulsed her; and if God were to answer some of our prayers, he would be as immoral as Herod. When you pray, it is to the Holy One; you have no right to insult his character by petitions which, if answered, would cheapen the moral values of his universe. He is the *Universal* Father—by what right do you ask him to make a favorite of you?

That is the significance of Jesus' repetition of the need for praying "in my name." Approach in the spirit of Jesus, conceiving of God in his terms, and at once some prayers become impossible. It is easy for savages to ask wild things of their idols, but it is different with the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who is perfect Love, Wisdom, and Holiness is often more wisely to be intrusted with our



affairs than to be pressed overmuch by petitions that are born of lesser love, wisdom, and purity.

This is first: *no invasion of the integrity of God's personality*. This is second: *no invasion of the ends of our own personality*. The prayer which, if answered, would check our development is illegitimate. Paul "besought the Lord thrice" and was denied; then it is the Christian man begins to ask why? Paul began to realize that it was better for him to learn the grace of God than to be relieved of a thorn in the flesh. When cholera was raging in England Charles Kingsley was asked to pray for its arrest. He flatly refused. He believed that the responsibility for the cholera lay with man, not with God. "Do not pray for rain: lock your rivers!" said a distinguished archbishop in Australia, pointing attention to the millions of gallons of water being allowed annually to flow in flooded rivers to waste during the rainy season.

## V

And yet there is virtue in such prayer if it is seen to be a means of learning wisdom. To pray is often to learn the incongruity of doing so and at the same time sitting still. Nehemiah prays for protection, and straightway sets a watch. "I knew my cruel brother's traps would not hurt the little birds, because I asked God not to let them," said the little girl.

“Is that all you did?”

“No. I went out and kicked the traps over.”

A hungry “tramp” knocks at the door of a country house, and prays for food. The housewife eyes him estimatingly, for there are many scamps abroad with pitiful stories but with hearts of loafers and rogues. How can she know if he is genuine? She offers him an ax and points to the woodpile; and if he is genuine, he will at once appreciate this way of earning his food honorably. If he is insincere, he will find an excuse and move on. But he accepts the suggestion, works at the woodpile, and at length returns with a self-respect that has not been sacrificed.

But now, who is to be thanked, his own right arm or the housewife? It is plain that had he not prayed, he would not have had the wood suggested and he would still have been hungry. But also, had the housewife given him food too easily, granting he was in health, she would have gratified him *at the expense of his personality*. If God were to carry us through life in upholstery made out of cheaply answered prayers, we certainly might have an easy time, but at fearful expense. Not the dwellers along the equator, amid abounding vegetation and fruits, but the inhabitants of the stern north, wrestlers with the blizzard, are the men who

have made history. Nehemiah upon the walls is Nehemiah writing his prayer in deeds. You must not ask for what will diminish your own values or choke your own depths.

All this engenders caution and discrimination. Absence of it explains unanswered prayers. When, however, one can say, as Jesus did, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work," a man's purpose moving harmoniously with the Father's, the efficacy of prayer begins to write itself out in the Journals of a John Wesley or the Life of a George Muller.

## VI

But let me sing the song of this great companionship! Let me tell how it rejuvenates faith and courage, creates seers and prophets and moral giants. The man of prayer will see life more truly and will dare more nobly than another. It is this which is most fertile in the production of ideas; the mind which learns to react with the Infinite Mind can never stagnate. When the tide ebbs the seashore is sometimes marked by chains of pools which would soon foul if left thus isolated and undisturbed. The returning tide pours change and disturbance into them, and they are saved. Alas for the man from whose mental shores the Ocean

Mind has long ebbcd! who has allowed sand bars of materialism to grow between himself and God! But great is he who knows seasons of divine inflow and disturbance—yes, *disturbance!* Such throb in man of the Infinite Life, such discontenting surge in him the powers of the world to come, have more than once proved the inaugural birth pangs of a new epoch.

But do we begin to speak the benefits of prayer? As well try to tell the values of going from the city to the mountains with their health, their wide prospect, their redemptive rest.

## JESUS

### I

“AND lifting up their eyes they saw no one save Jesus only.” That is what Matthew has to say of the disciples in that strange experience when Jesus “was transfigured before them.”

What, then, has become of Moses and Elijah, who but a moment since were seen in friendly converse with Jesus? They have merely appeared in the picture that they might fade from it, leaving him to fill it all. And what has become of this talk of tabernacles for Jesus and the others? It has simply stopped, because it somehow did not suit then any more than now: Jesus cannot be put on a level with any, even of the world's greatest. A mysterious voice always singles him out: “Hear *Him*.” Others were heaven appointed in their day, but once you have heard the voice of Jesus other voices, even of Moses and Elijah, lose their authority. No longer are there many masters, but One. At first we say, “I will bend the knee to Him as to the greatest teachers of our race.” Later we find we have somehow fallen prostrate upon our face, and we are not think-

ing of the company of the great ones in which He is worthy to stand, but we are thinking only of Him, in whose shining company no one is worthy to stand. The stars lightened our darkness until the sun arose. We lift up our eyes and see no one, save Jesus only, solitary, preeminent, peerless.

## II

Thus it is when the soul stands upon its summits; the lower ranges of experience do not make so clear and emphatic this realization of the unaccompanied maturity of Jesus. Estimate of highest, divinest human loveliness is not aided by the crookedness and materialism of spirits at their lower ebb. Eyes coarsened by selfishness are not in condition to read and realize sublimity such as resides in the face of Jesus. But in the occasional hour of the soul's best, when our feet stand upon the pinnacles, the preeminence of our Lord is realized.

It is significant that the soul's best moods should do such homage to Jesus; surely it is here that the soul may be trusted. This homage is independent of special theories about him, for men of widely different theology have united in it. Here is that rugged Scotchman, Carlyle, saying: "Our divinest Symbol . . . Jesus

of Nazareth. . . . Higher has human thought not yet reached. . . . A Symbol of quite perennial infinite character, whose significance will ever demand to be anew inquired into and anew made manifest." "Thou wilt become to such a degree the corner stone of humanity," cries Carlyle's antithesis, Ernest Renan, "that to tear thy name from this world would be to shake it to its foundations. Between thee and God men will no longer distinguish." Reading the Gospels in Saint Helena, Napoleon, in a passage that has become famous, exclaimed: "I am an understander, a reader of men. I tell you this Man was more than a man." "Christ is surely the most sublime image offered to human imaginations," Sir John R. Seeley assures us. No testimony to Jesus, however, is more beautiful than that of Theodore Parker: "The manliest of men, humane as a woman, pious and hopeful as a prayer, brave as man's most daring thought, he has led the world in morals and religion for eighteen centuries because he was the manliest man in it; hence the most divine."

One could assemble almost indefinitely such testimonies to the supremacy of Jesus, gathered from the hearts of men who in their day represented opposite schools of thought, and even opposing lines of action. And yet it must be

admitted that the figure of Jesus does not thrust itself upon the vision with the arresting impact of that of a John the Baptist, or a Napoleon Bonaparte. When he is first seen, his very excellence tends to prevent sudden appreciation. Where there is oddity, there is attention arrested. The overweening strength of a Napoleon, or the righteous austerity of a John the Baptist, lack that balanced symmetry which always must be pondered to be realized. The deep stains of a sunset or the sheer abruptness of a cliff catch the eye at once. But it is only as the mind lives with Jesus until he is known that there grows upon us a sense of his wondrous human completeness. He increasingly compels the thought: "Here is the harmony of our discords, the flower of our struggling roots, the completed circle of our baffled sections. This is humanity unblemished and mature, the goal to which our stumbling steps are summoned."

### III

Nowhere as in Jesus is humanity so triumphant, serene, strong, gentle. We look in vain for another. Human thought has dreamed such things as he was, but who else has summed up in himself the world's dreams as has our Lord? Gather our race's best thoughts about



God, most discerning and inspiring thoughts about men; bring your purest, noblest, tenderest codes of human duty, and they may all be shown vital in the flesh, in Jesus.

There were things in him that were not apparent to Jewish eyes. As Emerson reminds us: "No man can learn what he has not preparation for learning, however near to his eyes is the object. A chemist may tell his most precious secrets to a carpenter, and he shall never be the wiser—the secrets he would not utter to a chemist for an estate..."<sup>1</sup> So it was that the Jewish disciples missed much in Jesus, for while they were merely Jews, he was more than a Jew, being "the Son of *man*." Therefore in the stories of him written by Jews such as Matthew we get all that wealth about him which lay open to the eyes of a Jew, and which could not have been so seen by another. But there was much in Jesus that Matthew never saw, and never reported. Pass into the fourth Gospel and feel the change. That Gospel abounds in ideas that were found in the philosophy of that day, the Logos being the most striking example, but here they are attached to Jesus. How different this Jesus from that of Matthew! The church has always felt it, and used to account for it by saying

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<sup>1</sup> "*Spiritual Laws*."

that the fourth Gospel described the divinity of our Lord, and the others the humanity. Others, often critics of the church and outside it, insisted that here was no picture of Jesus at all, but a philosophic amalgam that had no resemblance to Him of Nazareth. But why either? Nothing that is human was foreign to Jesus, and the truth found by the Greek is not likely to be lacking in him. May not the Greek mind gaze upon him and see things withheld from the Jew? It is testimony to the Master's depth that the Greek mind did not come to him to be sent empty away. And we wait for the subtle Indian mind to discern still more, and the mind of the Mongol has yet to bring its key to open fresh treasure chambers in the mind of Christ.

Still men see differently, and probably all they see is true, however poorly expressed it sometimes may be. What two men read Shakespeare alike? To one man Hamlet is a fool; to another a startling portraiture of himself; so differently does experience prepare us to see or to be blind. We have our favorites in Shakespeare for the same reason. Personality, our own or another, never is capable of exhaustive delineation, and never is seen quite the same way by two different people.

## IV

This reflection should have taken the sting out of the debates upon the personality of Jesus that have divided friends and families and churches in all the Christian centuries and which have gone so far toward hindering the triumph of his spirit among men. If the elusiveness and mystery of personality are remembered better in our day, we shall not repeat the follies of our fathers. There are no doubt many left who will still insist upon definition and evaluation of our Lord, and who will cry out upon any who see in him something they do not, or who fail to share what they see, but there will be others, and wiser, who, while far from despising "the form of sound words," will be more appreciative of the elusive nature of truth, which so readily "breaks through language and escapes." These will love the highest when they see it, even if embarrassed to answer what precisely it is they love, and why. Machinery one may describe, but life is baffling. I have seen what purported to be photographs of thoughts, but always the effect upon me was to shock me with the smallness after all of what I had supposed to be so brilliant and so wide-winged. Also I have long read careful definitions of the incomparable

Master, and I have been content if I have been allowed to say, "These are fragments, approximations of the truth." But when I have been told that these are exact, and that I must accept them as the truth which must not be altered or challenged, I begin to shudder as one who has listened to blasphemy! Who are these that with easy pencil fill up the picture of our Lord, as if he were some idol of wood that possessed no mystery they could not explore? And yet we have them with us. They will tell you with precision how far Jesus is divine, what constitutes the atonement, all about what happened to him at his death and after. Our Lord is not allowed to be as interesting as the commonest man among us, who at least is too much of an enigma to be so confidently described.

The mischievous and false dogmatism about him has alienated many from discipleship who could neither believe nor love the little, hard and unreal presentations thrust upon them in place of the living and magnetic Person.

Frequently I am pressed to wonder how far such omniscient expounders of the mystery of Jesus realize that they themselves may be grasping a husk rather than the kernel, and how far they have really known him. The ages have been sick with the clash of creeds that

have had more champions than the spirit and message of Jesus. He has been recognized as the glory of our race, but we have been far more concerned to analyze and assess the nature of his glory than to reflect it. How the Master has regarded it we have not considered, any more than did those soldiers who left *him* on his cross while they disputed over his *garment*.

## V

When a man says to me, "I do not believe what you do about Jesus," I am bound to answer, "And you never will." Without straining himself to see these things just as others see them, let him reassure himself that truth is quite able to conduct its own arguments. Therefore let him quietly give truth a chance. Let him teach himself to walk with Jesus, think his thoughts, share his judgments; let him get the heart-beat of him, his generosity, sagacity, tranquility, power, purity, and he, Jesus, will do for himself what I could never do. He himself will teach you—well, we shall not quarrel about phrases, but there will be abiding facts whether phrases are found for them or not. The inescapable logic of common experience will bid you say, "He is Mediator,

Reconciler, Saviour"; for, explain it as we may, it is contact with Jesus that pours more renovating and reclaiming streams through human personality than are to be derived from anywhere else.

Not any one of the disciples began their fealty to Jesus with ideas of him that have since become current in the Christian Church, nor with ideas of him that they themselves later arrived at. Any zealot who insists to some hesitating mind that he simply must accept all that the church has claimed for Jesus—all, or nothing, who makes the alternative as sharp and as extreme as that, does not do our Lord service, and wrongs the soul of one who might have been ready for discipleship. One who walks steadily with the Master will probably move far in his estimates of him ere he finishes, but for many men there will be no discipleship, no deepening loyalties, no awakened wonderings, if the only Jesus they are offered is a highly debatable thing of metaphysics. Some minds will never be convinced or captivated on authority, ecclesiastical or other.

Not even to-day is it the elaborate Jesus of the creeds who conquers me! It is when I get back across the deserts of argument to cool Galilee and meet him there, real, warm, vital;

it is there, where I am not greeted with the hard clash of theological machinery, but with life; where he asks me for no belief about him but the belief that he is my friend, and where he takes me among the quiet hills and talks with me—just talks with me about God and about myself; talks with me until my heart burns, and new dawns arise, and life becomes invested with strange dignity, and heaven draws wondrous near and fills the common day with mystic presences—it is *there* he conquers me. Then I stand up and gaze at him with trembling lips and ask: “Who art thou? Who art thou? Art thou God? Art thou man? *What art thou?*” And looking back with eyes that do not tremble he replies: “I am the Light of the world.”

“Aye, Lord, indeed!”

“I am the Bread of Life.”

“Aye, Lord, verily!”

“He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.”

“Aye, Lord, and never till then!”

“I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life. I am the true Vine. I am the Resurrection and the Life.”

And then, there in green Galilee, far away from the rasp of polemic and “the craft of tongue and pen,” he has put his hands upon

my shoulders as a man who loves to talk with men, and he has searched my face in gentle, bantering mockery and has smiled and said: "And now, what am I?"

And I have shaken my head and answered, "Nay, Lord; I shall never know what thou art until I know all that God and man is."

Then by the shoulders he has drawn me closer, that I might better read his face, and he has spoken more earnestly as if he would bring me to something that mattered more than questions of that sort:

"Yes, yes; but in the meantime, what am I?"

And I have understood the thing he really cared for, and with an emotion such as moves the soul that has found the Ineffable, the Lode-Star, the Consummation, I have fallen on my knees before him and cried: "Thou art, thou art, forever and forever Lord and Master of my soul: for there is none else. Thou makest the stars pale and other masters dumb!"

Then he has lifted my face and smiled again upon it and said: "So you do not wait until you have *explained?*" And what, when it came to decision, could I ever answer but such things as amounted on the whole to this: "Ah, my Lord, whither should my spirit turn, if it turn away from thee? Where among the



children of men shall I find a beauty as in thee, thus to bind me hand and foot? Where else as here shall I find a magic voice to break profane infatuations, and thrill me upward to my best? Who else will open heaven to my soul and bring me to the Father? Oh, there is no other! To whom else should one go? *Thou* hast the words of eternal life!"

"Who should be king save Him who make us free?" But who makes us free as Jesus Christ, our Lord?

# JESUS

(CONCLUDED)

## I

THE Lordship of Jesus does not wait upon metaphysical interpretations of his Person, and, theological opinions apart, he must ever be Master to all who are ready to surrender to the highest we know, for Jesus is that. Intellectual revolt from the dogma of the church does not absolve an honest man from loyalty to Jesus of Nazareth, whose conception of life, of duty, of God, remains the best guide, revelation, nourishment in divine things that we possess.

It must be felt, however, that the matter cannot be left here. The custom of Christians from the first is not so light a thing that it may be simply ignored, and that custom has been to pray to Jesus Christ, to believe he is an ever-living Presence, to ascribe to him the nature of God and to call him God. With perfect sincerity many to-day are finding such difficulty in following that custom that they frankly, some even militantly, decline to con-

form to it. To them it is a survival of that deification of heroes spoken of by Renan, altogether too naïve to be credited by the philosophic mind.

Yet there were philosophic minds in other ages than ours, and the great doctrines of Christendom certainly cannot be charged with being the plebeian offsprings of intellectual flabbiness. Modifications and developments in our statements of faith may indeed be forced as each new generation feels its obligation to speak in its own accent and according to its own light in order that faith's reality may be preserved, but surely no changes are likely to come which will cause the thoughtful man to feel that the statements he discards are wholly foolish and entirely without significance or foundation. If Christendom has called Jesus "God" can it be altogether without reason? And if there is impatient reaction from that term in some quarters may it not be that, at least in certain cases, the reaction is the more violent because unaccompanied neither by fair endeavor to understand precisely what is meant by the term, nor by courageous reflection upon the problem of Christ's Person. For there is undoubtedly such a problem; and if it is not to be solved by the mere claims of current Christology, neither is it to be escaped by a

deprecating pout of the lips. Jesus Christ remains, demanding explanation and a category. Our very insistence upon the scientific temper of our age, upon the compulsions of reason, makes us to that extent less able to leave this unique Figure unassessed. "What think ye of Christ?" It is not depth but shallowness that lightly replies, "A man like the rest of us!" and stops there. Scant respect, this, to the intellectual genius of those hosts whose thought has tarried provoked before this enigmatical Figure, and scant respect, also, to the spiritual instinct of still greater hosts who have fallen at Christ's feet to cry, "My Lord and my God!"

## II

This lovable and impressive Jew of the first century had some arresting things to say about himself which cannot fairly be passed unexamined by any who would seek to get at who or what he was. One such saying starts into memory: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." But no sooner does one ask precisely what this means than a certain difficulty becomes apparent. "He that hath seen me—" but who ever saw Jesus, or who ever saw any man, for that matter, except as he shines through the veils that garb him, as

light through a cloud that covers the sun from our direct seeing. Personality, being spiritual, is never seen face to face. Yet the light that filters through the cloud tells of greater glory from which it came, and there is similar testimony in the light that lies about Jesus. Men have loved to bask in his light even when they have not cared to ask its origin. The world has warmed itself in the Light that is Christ, and that Light has been pouring healing into our wounds and cleanness into our sewers and assurance onto our path; but not all who have lived by that Light have concerned themselves with questions of its source. Yet the richest and most vital feature of the message of Jesus will have been missed unless the meaning of him is faced—not of his teachings nor of his works (though these can never be separated from one) but of himself.

It may be that we can more easily ask questions about Jesus than answer them. His Person, just who and what he himself is, is one of the most provoking problems of religion. If the intellect balks at the ascription to him of Deity, on the other hand, it does not rest satisfied in leaving him labeled as a man. He is that, but somehow the intellect grows restive under his confinement to this limitation, feeling that his unquestionable uniqueness

has not thus been done justice to. Yet we have no vocabulary to meet his case. He is something apart. "We have no word," we might confess. "God we know and man we know, but who is *this*, suggesting both, yet precisely fitting our conceptions of neither?" Yet one cannot but feel that the problem, far from being neglected on account of its difficulty, must, rather, be persistently studied as the most ultimate and rewarding of all, for knowledge of Jesus Christ is knowledge of God and of man.

### III

In certain quarters it has been customary in speaking of our Lord Jesus Christ to assist toward clear thought by making a discrimination between "Jesus" and "Christ." It is not necessary to push this discrimination too insistently, but for the purposes of our discussion it will be useful to observe it, applying the word "Jesus" to the normal *human* life of our Lord, and employing the term "Christ" to describe something else.

There was a Jew, then, who lived in Palestine long ago. His name was Jesus. But that is passed. There was Something or Someone who lived in Jesus and who, as we believe, has never died. We are calling that *Christ*.

Explain it as we may, Jesus brought God nearer to men than they had ever known him before, so that religion has become a new thing; and the hope of the world, the joy of life, the power of the Divine Presence, all have risen to new and unexampled measure since Jesus came. These are mere statements of fact, as one may state facts by declaring that the Northern Lights are playing and that he listened the other night by radio to a concert rendered a thousand miles away. Such statements of fact have their interest, but what is of even vaster significance to us is to know what is that mysterious world behind, of which these facts are merely the visible flower. To grow in knowledge of that is to grow in power; for then one, understanding somewhat the universe that God has made, learns to work in sympathy with it, until he can crush rocks to powder, spread his wings in the clouds, and make his voice with the speed of lightning to travel round the earth. It is not enough to acknowledge facts. They are small incidents compared with the vital world behind them and which they are publishing.

It is a fact that the purity of Jesus was like mountain snow at sunrise, when the cold whiteness is beautiful with gold and warm with rose; it is a fact that his goodness was

better than snow, which, after all, suggests only an absence of dirt, for not the absence of badness but the rich presence of virtue, mature and commanding, was the splendor of him; it is a fact that he lived with men as one whose joyous social instincts were urgent and imperative, and that he walked with God as one whose spiritual apprehensions were natural, effortless, and inevitable; it is a fact that when he speaks of men the heart of humanity thrills as a rich harpstring at the touch of its master; it is a fact that when he speaks of God men sit rapt and hushed and satisfied as if they watched the opening of new and diviner worlds. Facts they are—that no man ever lived as he lived, that no man ever spake as he spake; they are facts which all may test.

But, after all, they are facts that are nearly two thousand years old, and, if that is all, then are they but little more related to me and not a very great deal more valuable than the wealth of old Lydia and the navies of Carthage.

The imperishable value of Jesus Christ to us men, however, is not to be looked for in all that dazzling bloom of peerless words and character. The significance of the bloom lies in the inquiry it drives us to concerning the hidden stems and roots of it. The wealth of



Lydia and the navies of Carthage are fallen and scattered like withered petals, but not so the forces of human mind and spirit on whose strong stems they once blossomed. Study these out-blossomings of the mind and spirit of man if you would understand a little better the folly, the ingenuity, the power of your kind. From generation to generation humanity still persists; it, at least, does not wither and pass. And continually is it throwing to the surface facts that tell about itself. The facts are of value because of their revelation of the vaster truth.

Say not, therefore, that the facts about Jesus have no longer any relation to us. He was an efflorescence of Eternal Truth and Being, Being which men have struggled after always, and not without reward, but which was manifested fullest in him. The "*effulgence*" of God's glory, the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews describes him, "the very *image* of his substance." "The image of the invisible God," Paul says in similar figure. "No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he" writes the mystic writer of the fourth Gospel, "hath declared him."

Jesus is a revelation of God as a flower is a revelation of the plant that bears it.

## IV

That Jesus is thus a revelation of God will probably present small difficulty to many, but the question which is urgent is larger than that.

In claiming so vast a thing for Jesus we, perchance, will get further in commending our claim if we rely not so much upon recognized arguments which go to show that Jesus was more than a man. If it be at all possible to throw light upon just what we mean when we make vast claims for our Lord, the reasonableness thereof may do more toward strengthening faith than any number of arguments that seem to maintain a position which, when all is said and done, seems to be inherently irrational.

We have said that Jesus is an efflorescence of God. Now we raise the question: *Is he, himself, God?* In seeking to face it, let us ask this: Is the flower then a thing apart, and not itself the plant? No one contends that. Is Jesus Christ then a thing apart from God, or should we call him God? We need not tarry to point out that we do not call the man Jesus by that name, for the flesh perishes and God is Spirit. But what may we call that Someone who dwelt in Jesus as the explanation of his

glory? The fourth Gospel, apprehending in our Lord Something that was without birth and without death, in the beginning with God, and itself God, gave it a name which we have translated "Word," and said, "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us."

Very well, he used that word to describe a manifestation of God which he believed had been made in Jesus. Others, speaking of the same Truth, used different words, some speaking of the "Son," others of the "Mystery," while yet others called It "Christ." Were not all such words laboring to describe Something that is beyond us, Something without precedent, for which our vocabulary is inadequate and which we yet find to be inescapably real?

## V

There was a quality in Jesus which the word "humanity" did not seem adequate to express, and it has been the custom of Christendom to describe it by the word "God." Have we, after all, any other word quite so suitable? We may give it a more characteristic description by calling It "Christ," but, *if by the word "Christ" is meant the Eternal Truth, that was before Jesus was born, that dwelt in Jesus and that persists now that the man Jesus is gone—if*

*this is Christ, then Christ is God.* This it was in Jesus that unfolded itself, or himself, in divine flowers of word and work. The whole life of Jesus was a bloom of God. Mankind has plucked the fragrant bloom and called it "God," and mankind surely has done well—as well as one who takes a flower and says it is plant. Of course it is plant, of the very life and nature of plant; it is not animal, nor mineral, though something of mineral may be present to help make it shape itself. Yet assuredly it is plant.

But in admitting this—and here is a feature of this subject which surely ought carefully to be indicated—let us not fail to see that it is not all of the plant. The flower has no roots, no leaves, no stems—has not a plant all these? Yet the flower is plant and without it no plant would be perfect. A mistake is made when one separates flower from stem and seeks to describe each separately as if they were not one—as Jesus said of himself, "I and the Father are one." Another mistake is made when one is so zealous to give the flower its true name and to call it plant that the flower is hailed as complete, self-sufficient, possessing all the roots and branches of plant life. Though it is indeed truly plant, it has not all the functions of a plant, any more than Christ, who is God, when he dwelt in Jesus, can be fairly described as

complete, and self-sufficient God. "Verily, verily, I say unto you," said our Master, "The Son can do nothing of himself." But God, who is the Absolute, Self-existent, Independent, can do all things of himself. And our Lord Jesus Christ, in the days of his flesh, while of the same nature as God, must not be described as the Absolute, the Self-dependent, for he is not God in that sense. These are qualities of Deity which were not manifested in Jesus, in whom God, for our sakes, "became poor."

Howbeit, if any man puzzled in his questions to find a category for Jesus Christ should protest that the limitations of a flower make it inaccurate for one to call it plant, and if he prefers to give it another name, rather than sacrifice this Flower's ministry to him by making him turn from it with impatience through a mere warfare of phrases, would it not be fair of an adviser to say: "Give it what name you will, but study it as a revelation of the Plant upon which it grows and from which it draws the life that makes its beauty. Through the Flower, be it plant or not, you may learn the meaning of Plant-life, and be sure you come to know that at least; for, after all, the Plant is more than its Flower, though, as we believe, the Flower is of the same nature as the Plant"?

## VI

The question urging itself upon some minds will, of course, be that this does not make Jesus Christ different from any one of us, seeing that God has flowered in us all, and that, even if Christ be the fairest bloom, there yet remains in him nothing to justify the extreme laudation of the Christian Church.

One feels no need to resist the contention that it makes Jesus the same as all of us, for if we are to confine ourselves to the words of Jesus in seeking an estimate of his person, we shall be impressed by his preference for the term "Son of man" as applied to himself. This is the description he chose and used continually, and it ought to convince us of his seeing unity between himself and us. When, however, this kinship is pushed so far as to mean that he was in no wise different from us, what better can we do than cease discussion and simply stand alongside Christ by way of measurement?

Somehow there are vast differences, and yet those are the differences which create such a challenge to our explanation. One asks, "Are we then all Christs?" and, "With such kinship, may we not all some day grow to his stature?" etc. In this connection it may be pertinent to quote President William Jewett Tucker, in his

*Life in Himself: A Meditation on the Consciousness of Jesus Christ.*

“A perfect man, of the degree of the perfection of Jesus Christ, reaching ‘unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ,’ is to me more incomprehensible, more impossible, than the incarnate Son of God. I would deny no essential likeness of the human to the Divine; but even if we carry the likeness to the possibility of a divine humanity, we are not to overlook the fact that a difference in degree may amount to a difference in kind. I take a drop out of the ocean. The drop is like the ocean, but it is swayed by no tides, it bears no ships on its bosom, it does not unite continents. I take a grain of earth from a mountain. The grain is like the mountain, but I can dig no quarries out of its bowels, I can cut no forests on its slopes, I do not see it lifting its summits to the first light of the day. Man may be like God, but I locate Jesus, not in the drop and the grain, but in the ocean and the mountain. . . . I search among the sons of men of all time, and I look in vain for one who had the consciousness of ‘life in himself.’ . . . No: any interpretation of the personal life of Jesus Christ which can satisfy my mind must allow it the substance and quality and fullness of the life of God. I grant the mystery of the incarna-

tion, but I prefer mystery to insufficiency in my faith. As I watch the process by which men are made to become sons of God, as I follow the stream of human redemption in its ceaseless and widening course, I can trace it to no other or nearer source than the Eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ."

## VII

At the risk of repetition, let us make clear that what we declare concerning Jesus Christ is that he was a manifestation in time of a timeless Truth, a revelation in form and flesh of a spiritual Power and Person who has no form that we are able to conceive. It existed before Jesus came, but many things exist which we never knew until they housed themselves in form. Electric energy shapes itself in the lightning and is revealed. We might never have known it otherwise. But our business has been to improve our knowledge and then to learn how to use this thrilling force.

There was a moment in human affairs when the loving, seeking, saving, qualities of God focused themselves into human form as never before. Our eyes have been dazzled with that light! The burning flame that lit our spiritual skies has gone, but not the ageless, exhaustless



qualities of God that caused it. We might never have known had Jesus not come, but now we know forever. You cannot picture God, but you can conceive him best when you look into the face of Jesus Christ. You cannot imagine what electricity is like, but you are left less ignorant after you have looked into the face of the lightning. When we speak of Christ our present Saviour, we are not thinking backward two thousand years, except to the extent that we want a likeness of an incomprehensible truth. We mean by Christ those ever-present, ever-seeking, regenerating realities of God that are as a Shepherd, as Living Bread, as a Door into a sheepfold, as Resurrection from the dead. There is in the Godhead what may rightly be called a passion for men—a will to save.

Mankind had had a glimpse of this before, but the manifestation glowed in Jesus as a beacon on a crag. He was the Saviour, and he is the Saviour, for nothing divine can die. His flesh is perished, but the eternal grace he focused in himself pursues its redemptions forever, but with vaster sweep. Therefore, as Paul says, "though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more." He hath ascended. He sitteth on the right hand of power.

## THE CROSS

### I

How is it that the cross of Jesus has come to be so impressive a thing among men? Its shadow is upon all the New Testament; from spire and tower it overtops the towns and cities of Europe; it is Christ upon the cross that Dante finds himself unable to describe; it is the most affecting inspiration of art; and, in Christendom at least, it is the most sacred symbol of holy things. It has created a literature and a hymnody, and from countless pulpits during nearly two thousand years it has been offered to the world as its glorious hope. What is the meaning of it all? Sympathy with the suffering of a good man? Then why not the ax that beheaded Saint Paul, or the faggot that burned Saint Mark, or the rope that hanged Saint Luke, or the spear that stabbed Saint Thomas? Or is there something deeper, some passionate significance more vitally related to the deepest needs of men?

We are familiar with the long custom that associates with the cross of Jesus some achievement on our behalf and some mysterious

mediation, to us of redemption. Redemption and the cross have been ever bound together. How? and why? are questions that have been much disputed; language has been used that no longer convinces us, and which we sometimes feel has been even injurious. Resentment on account of language that displeases us has often been allowed to obscure the deep significance which alone can account for the sustained interest in the subject. "God quenched the flaming sword of his anger in the blood of Christ" is an irritating enough declaration, but what shall we say of the man who is so incensed by the words as not to see that the theologian who said it was wrestling with some fearfully vast idea? Manifestly, the death of Christ was to him the supreme enactment of time. The darkness seems never to have lifted from the hill called "Golgotha," where "our dear Lord was crucified," and the centuries, in trying to penetrate it, have felt that the death it covers is somehow different from all others.

For great numbers Christ's death remains thus significant, but there are others. To them Jesus and his death exhibit nothing beyond the death of any good man foully murdered. When such an opinion rests upon many years of ripe study and experience of the subject it must be met with respect, but I

submit that the intense fascination exerted by the cross of Jesus demands deeper explanation. One feels, as one has said of another matter, "as if he were being offered a box of matches in explanation of the flame of Jupiter, or a child's box of colors to account for the tint of all the oceans!"

## II

When Shakespeare was preparing to present the performances of King Henry of England in France he complained, with something like disgust, at the narrowness of the stage upon which he was compelled to arrange his picture. "Can this cockpit hold the vasty fields of France?" he exclaimed; "or may we cram within this wooden O, the very casques that did affright the air at Agincourt?" He rather would have "a kingdom for a stage" but is, instead, compelled to call upon the imaginations of his audience to suppose that "within the girdle of these walls are now confined two mighty monarchies. Into a thousand parts divide one man," he invites them, and so, by every means, to look upon this little stage and imagine the vaster. But as a matter of fact, if Shakespeare could have taken his audience to France itself, and shown them

Henry's campaign in undiminished action and splendor, he would have achieved little more than the bewildering of the people's minds. His only way of bringing to them a conception of the truth was for him to lay hold of it with his own master mind, select the salient features, the chief characteristics, and by compressing them into narrow compass, present them to his audience in a measure that they could grasp. In other words, it was necessary for him to take the truth as it stood in its largeness and dramatize it into small but comprehensible measure, thereby not altering the truth but allowing it to be grasped.

Have we not reason to think that in some such manner as this the infinite truth of God which, in its strength, would simply overwhelm the mind, has, from time to time, been "dramatized" in one way and another? And is it not just to claim that in the life and death of Jesus we behold, better than anywhere else, the "dramatizing" of his eternal and infinite reality? There is a striking passage in the book of Revelation: "And I beheld, and, lo, in the midst of the throne . . . stood a Lamb as it had been slain." "*In the midst of the throne,*" in the very heart of the being of God, is something of which the cross is our best symbol. Jesus in his life and in his death was the intel-

ligible expression of something profoundly and permanently essential in the nature of God.

“But so is any man a dramatizing of God.” Perfectly true—it is our glory! He who doubts it has not grasped the truth of the immanence of God. Every man is in some real sense an incarnation of God. Is this a dream? Then it is also a dream that God can ever mean much to us, for if you insist upon separating him from this intimate indwelling, you also separate us from knowing anything about him. An unrelated abstraction, without character or characteristic is the alternative, lacking the very perfections which we recognize to be most divine, which can only be by his relationships with his creatures. But if God is immanent as well as transcendent, I shall recognize and know him in the highest examples of human excellence. If God dwells and works in men, I shall see no great deed or virtue without feeling it right to say, “It is God’s *efflorescence!*”

It is not without import that the ancients believed that the gods sometimes took human shape; we may yet come to see that God continually takes human shape. This is not to say that all that is human is God and that therefore we are God. But it is to say that God, who is infinitely greater than man, yet

actually dwells in us, and more and more as we show him hospitality.

Two factors require notice here: (1) God must always be greater than he can ever show himself through man, because man's capacity as a medium is limited. For example, when we ascribe omnipotence, eternity, to God, and speak of him as "the Absolute," we are stating ideas about him that seem intellectually necessary rather than reporting the revelation of himself he is able to make through man—unless, of course, the "necessary idea" is itself the result of a subconscious awareness of the nature of God, arising from his indwelling. (2) As a palace provides better entertainment for a king than does a hut, so a man of genius enables a larger and more various manifestation of God than a common man—always assuming in each case the desire to entertain him; for the Great King will cross no inhospitable threshold, and join no company out of sympathy with himself—no, not though it be housed in the genius of a Voltaire!

So there are gradations in God's self-revelation; there must always be, so long as men vary. Yet in every good life one may see God manifest in the flesh. In seeing the Great Incarnation let us not be blind to the lesser, for they make more reasonable and intelligible

the greater. Everest would be an incredibility if all else of the earth were a plain. Handel would be meaningless to us, if in him alone dwelt the spirit of music. Christ could be no Master and Teacher of men if men were not themselves tabernacles of the Eternal Spirit, until spirit answers to spirit, truth to truth, and God to God. As an incarnation of God Jesus is supreme—but not alone. Though God may be said to be diminutively “dramatized” in every spiritually healthy life, it is a simple matter of fact that we see God “in the face of Jesus Christ” as we see him nowhere else. God is God always, whether found in us or in Jesus; as light is light wherever we find it. Thank God for the stars that illumine our darkness, the great ones of the earth in whom God has in all ages shone with that “true light which lighteth every man coming into the world.” Yet the brightest star that ever shone pales before the rising of that golden sun of truth which we call Jesus! If you would study the nature of light will you gain aught by ignoring the sun? On the other hand, does the glory of the sun demand that you deny the stars?

### III

Holding fast, then, this truth of God’s radiant immanence in Christ, the incarnation,



let us pass again to that other peak of Christianity, the cross.

In Gospels and Epistles the writers seem unable to escape the fascination of the cross and a sense of its central importance. The first Christians never contemplated it without emotion. The religious experience of countless believers through the centuries has combined to indorse this importance and share this emotion. Always able to see that it was innocence and love that suffered, and that the suffering was both from the malignance and for the sake of the ungodly, the wondering heart has ever filled before this vision of vicarious love. It was "for our sakes" that "he became poor," and he died—"the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Sin wreaked its spite on him. Verily he sustained in himself "the iniquity of us all."

Yet not as one who could do naught else. Less devotion to the cause of men would have escaped the cross. Compromise with the vicious spirit that was assailing him, which was the Arch-Schismatic, seeing it separated man from his Maker, and which was the spirit he had come to change—less loyalty to the only truth that could set men free and bring them to the Father—would have eluded the cross. Believers, standing in the shadow of "a lonely

hill," have continued to be subdued by the love that could thus die. "For," as we ever say, "the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that one died for all, therefore all died; and he died for all, that they which live should no longer live unto themselves, but unto him who for their sakes died and rose again."

Many, however, have died for men in just that way, and the spectacle is always moving. In all ages the sublime self-offering of martyrs to truth, suffering on account of the sins of men, has defended by blood the higher way and purchased men to it. The connection of "our lesser Calvaries" with the "green hill far away" was felt by Doctor Harris when out of the red heart of war he looked upon youth dying to save, and wrote his "Supreme Sacrifice."

"Long years ago, as earth lay dark and still,  
Rose a loud cry upon a lonely hill,  
While in the frailty of our human clay,  
Christ, our Redeemer, passed the selfsame way."

Not robbing Calvary of aught of its meaning, "our lesser Calvaries" instead lift up divinely kindled torches about Christ's cross, revealing the awful divinity there. It is the unique significance of Christ's person that

gives all that he does a meaning beyond any comparison. We tell with thrilling pulses the story of Livingstone, of Huss, of Savonarola, and of the redemptions wrought through them, but when we come to one "place of a skull" it is to gaze, and falter, and halt for phrase, until we cry with Dante

*"Christ*

Beam'd on that cross; and pattern fails me now!"

Somehow, there we feel the presence of primal things of God. They are always felt when we are with *Jesus Christ*. Christ on the cross disturbs us with a species of terror and also with strange joy—terror at the sin of man that could work its outrage here, on *him*, and joy at the love of God that is greater than man's sin. Presences move in the background of *that* cross.

Out of full hearts the apostles poured their story, straining language to tell what they could not clearly see, employing such metaphors as their times and training made natural—metaphors not so natural to us. Our attempts to strain their metaphors into definitions, and to find cold disquisitions on theology amid exuberant outpourings of hearts struggling to tell the redemptions of God as revealed in Christ, have led us to much unreal and im-

possible, if not mischievous, dogma concerning the death of our Lord. We are beginning to see that the great Latin mind, with its mania for precision, its genius for law rather than for literature and art, has tricked us much, filching from us more than we can spare of the coloring and content of scriptural imagery. The metaphors about Christ cannot all be taken literally even by the most partial literalist. As has been well pointed out concerning these figures, "taken literally, they are mutually contradictory. Christ cannot be at the same time Ransom and Redeemer, Priest and Sacrifice, Propitiation and Advocate."<sup>1</sup> One has but to ponder the pictures lying at the back of each of these words to realize this. No doubt there will be many who feel themselves unable to breathe much longer the hard atmosphere of Roman law courts and of the forensic theology born there, and these may be in danger of renouncing, with that metallic shell, the truth bound up in it. Even these will feel, however, that Christian *experience* answers easily and naturally to the great passages about the vicarious nature of Christ's death, when those passages are freed from forced interpretations. God was incarnate in Christ, and the In-

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<sup>1</sup> *Christ and the Eternal Order*, John Wright Buckham, p. 136.

carnate bore the sin of man as truly as love is ever bound to bear the sin of the loved, tasting the cruel spear of it even in the heart. He "bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sin, should live unto righteousness." "Christ is High Priest, and Mediator, and sacrifice, and veil, and altar, not because he *is* any one of these, or even closely analagous to any one of them, but because he has plainly superseded them all"<sup>2</sup>—this is the thought of the Epistle to the Hebrews; in his life and death he woos us, he shows us the Way, "no man cometh unto the Father but by" him, and through him we receive "the reconciliation." In its entirety, this is experience.

#### IV

We spoke of presences in the background of the cross—a background that is infinite because of the incarnation. Earlier we suggested that the cross was a "dramatizing" into comprehensible measure of deep things of God.

Observe that there is nothing new in Christ's death, however; only a vivid culmination of all that went before. In the temptation, the self-forgetfulness at the well, the compassion

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<sup>2</sup> *How Christ Saves Us*, Rev. James M. Wilson, D.D., p. 42.

for the multitude, the tears for others' grief, the menial washing of the feet, the same spirit of self-refusal and self-expenditure for the good of men is continually expressed. The cross expresses it, too, but as a burning climax. The sublimity of love and service that shone through all his deeds and words as a soft and lambent light here is gathered into a passionate and awakening focus. The cross becomes the most effective symbol of our Lord, of his character and message, telling of unselfishness, love, service, purity, persuasion, pouring themselves out in a redemptive enterprise on a scale never seen before—or since.

But what then? These things are God in man, these redemptive things. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto himself." If the cross symbolizes them, it symbolizes an eternal truth, eternal because it is of the very nature of God. Gaze upon the cross and behold the central moral principle of Deity! That which we call "the Passion" happened not merely once in history; it is always happening. The Lamb was slain "before the foundation of the world." God is always the Good Shepherd, the Tireless Seeker, the Redeemer, the Lover. Calvary was an outward and visible exhibition of an eternal truth; Calvary is past, but the truth it showed continues. We might

never have known these things except through Jesus, for until one is shown the truth one may live in its company and not see it. But since Jesus revealed it, thousands have seen it testified to in themselves also. Francis Thompson is pursued by a Presence he cannot shake off; George Matheson surrenders to the "Love that wilt not let me go." . . . The eternal passion is lifted from its cold isolation and becomes an objective, intense, subduing and redeeming reality in the ever-present life of God.

## V

May not one go further and speak of the stricken anguish of Calvary bearing witness to something abiding in God's all-pitying heart? Indeed, can one avoid so doing? The sin of man frustrates him, deprives him. Redemptive energies are never separate from cost. A mother expends herself for her erring child far more than her child ever dreams. Who can reckon the toll placed upon the spirit by such emotions as sympathy, solicitude, entreaty? It is pouring out one's life to save! What does the New Testament mean by saying men "crucify the Son of God afresh and put him to an open shame," and that they "trample underfoot the Son of God and count the blood

of the covenant an unholy thing and do despite to the Spirit of grace"? It is all in the present tense! The redeeming solicitude of God our Saviour may still be "trampled on" and "put to open shame" by man.

No more does God in Christ walk and work in Galilee, teaching and restoring and comforting; no more do the wild lilies see him come, nor the "silver harvest of the sea" prompt his thrilling challenge to his own: "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Yet the perfect story goes on: as long as God dwells with men the ministry of Jesus is a temporary picture of a permanent truth. Still God is teaching, calling, comforting, pardoning, reclaiming.

No more does God in Christ stand in the judgment hall of Pilate, but ever and ever does he take his place in the hall of the soul's judiciary, fictitiously indicted, gloriously exonerated, Conscience saying, "I find no fault in him," yet miserably delivering him to be crucified in answer to the howling demands of the baser self. And ever God bears his cross and suffers on it as evil men temporarily triumph and darkness settles upon their world; but invariably in wondrous, resurrected power, God comes back to resume his ministry and to endure rebuffs, but by all means, as he is able, to save men from themselves.



And he will follow, follow, he will follow until that hour come when the baubles that infatuate to-day have lost their gilt, the false sweets have turned insipid, and the tired, jaded soul pauses disillusioned in the charred midst of its bitter, fruited selfishness. In that hour his following feet will pause beside us, and if not to-day, if not to-day, before the wreckage come, perhaps *then* we will give ourselves to the only arms that can shelter, to the only heart that can see us as we are and yet love us, to the only strong life that can truly feed, repair, redeem the poor futile things we are, giving us such inspiration as sets the feet aspiring up the mountains of God, on whose high crests rest the calm, bright stars, that he alone may reach who learns through God to climb.

“Unto him that loveth us, and loosed us from our sins by his blood; and he made us to be a kingdom, to be priests unto his God and Father; to him be the glory and the dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”

## SALVATION

### I

ONE is never quite sure whether to appreciate the note of urgency or to be shocked at the parochial imagination that lies in the question pressed by some ardent religionists: "Are you saved?" "Alas, if I am not!" one might answer. But there would be equal reason why one should say: "Alas, if I am!—for then how small a thing is salvation!" If one should say both, the replies would not be contradictory so much as complementary. There is a sense in which we are saved in Christ now; there is a sense in which we are not saved in a thousand years. When a man passes beyond hearsay and tradition and makes his acceptance of Christ intelligently personal, in that hour he has surrendered a self-principle that makes for increasing death, and he has embraced instead the Christ principle or spirit, which makes for increasing life.

It may seem a trifling thing to see a man who has been facing west swing round upon his heel and face east. He stands in the same place: what has altered? Yet this is the

difference, that whereas once he faced toward the approaching *night*, now he looks toward the awakening *day*. Is there no material difference between night and day? If a man walks west, will it make no difference from the result had he walked east? If a man walks with self, will it be much the same in the long run as if he had walked with Christ? Is there nothing to fear? Are there no terrible disintegrations possible—things whatever they be, for which our fathers used the names which we have surely not outgrown: sin, death? No west, no east; no death, no salvation. But there *is* salvation, and a man is saved in the hour when he adopts in Christ the spirit that makes for day and life. Many are unable to record that hour, but the important matter is their conscious loyalty to the spirit of Christ. In that spirit a man is as one who faces east, and he is saved. Yet salvation has only begun, and but a little consideration is necessary to show in what sense the man is by no means saved.

## II

The solidarity of the race, while furnishing us with “the moral momentum of a good ancestry,” also accounts for many fearful

problems in us—"sins of will, defects of doubt, and taints of blood." Heredity works both ways. Spiritual and moral paralysis, bias, mal-sightedness, remind us of deleterious forces that were at work ere we were born, the effects of which are painfully with us, causing large areas that must be reclaimed before we can be said to be saved. The wide ambitions of God's salvation are not to be completed in a day. Every new entrance of the divine life, through Christ enhances progress in the long reclamation. "I see a different law in my members, warring against the law of my mind," cries Paul, expressing a consciousness of controversy between better and worse which every earnest man has known. A man may look upon every good thing in him and say, "There am I saved, by the grace of God!" Upon every blemished and unhealthy thing in him he may look and say, if he is earnestly, cheerfully trusting God through Christ, "There am I being saved, and my salvation is nearer than when I first believed!"

One of the speculations of science has been concerning the manner of life's first appearance upon this planet. Science gives a picture of the earth lying scarred and barren after ages of upheaval. But, somehow, life came, and it gradually reclaimed the earth from its un-

seemly dearth, spreading wide the forests and the grasses and the flowers, and peopling it with birds and beasts. But how did life come? Lord Kelvin once suggested that a world on which was life may have collided in space and that later a fragment—"the moss grown ruins of another world,"—like a meteor fell here. It is a fanciful conception, but it is useful to us in this study. The world was dead. Somehow, sometime, life entered. In that moment the world was saved: however insignificant the germ, no longer was this world lifeless. Yet how much of plain and hill and valley must that life conquer ere the earth could be termed saved indeed? This is how men are saved and not saved. That man is not lifeless who carries so much as a spark of grace in his heart; yet is a man not saved though through years the grace of God has been spreading and conquering within him.

Or consider it in this aspect. Certain large tracts of England had for many centuries been known as the fen country. That country was treacherous, noisome, useless, waterlogged, until some man dreamed of a change to happy homes, farms, flowers, and harvests. An audacious scheme of drainage was prepared. But why should the government accept that scheme? Even if drainage should succeed, the

very soil was rotten. Yet in the hour when the project was accepted by the government the fens were reclaimed—and they were not reclaimed for years! What collecting of resources, installing of trench and barrier! What slow running away of water that had poisoned the land for generations unnumbered! But steadily here and there the land rose bare to the sky, and the energies of the sun began to cleanse the soil, pouring into it sweetness and health, and so, gradually, the fens were reclaimed.

Christ dreamed a thrilling dream of human redemption, and he brings his proposals to each man. Man may raise incredulous objections, but in that hour in which a man's *government* accepts Christ and his plan of recovery the man is saved—yet not saved. The very soil requires sweetening in the sun, and though this end is assured from the beginning, by no means is it achieved from then.

### III

This plan of recovery, this “plan of redemption,”—if one may dare use the phrase and yet hope to leave the mind virgin of the stiff and artificial ideas so often represented by it—what of it? That we are “saved by faith” is

too prominently written in Scripture, and in experience, not to be recalled to mind. "To him that worketh not," declared Paul in a characteristic sentence, "but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, *his faith* is counted for righteousness." One can imagine the delight a passage of this sort would have brought to the heart of a John Wesley, and one wonders if a Jonathan Edwards, or any of the older preachers, would have been other than at home with it. Those old warriors of the Undying Cause loved to get a text of Scripture that was full of meat, and then they would deal with it mightily, and leisurely, and if they did keep their congregations long at the gospel table, at least they sent them away well fed. The passage quoted is close-packed, and has an old-fashioned flavor about it that is very pleasant, and who knows whether it may not still be able to confer blessings of old-fashioned healing and peace. At least it is a window into the mind of Paul, whose guidance in matters of the soul's salvation is not to be despised.

Observe the word "ungodly," once so central to the preaching of the pulpit giants of old. To them the fiercest problem of all, and the most fundamental, was the spiritual derangement of men, and I do not see that human nature has changed. With genuine insight

into essentials those old renovators of their kind used to insist that it was of little use putting patches into rotten garments, or varnishing worm-eaten and decayed timbers. Character, they believed, needed deeper treatment than superficial makeshift if it were to be saved. They used to talk of a new birth, of a making of things all new. We have not changed, and still there are those who have not grasped the truth that underneath a hundred troubles the central problem is our own ungodly selves. The fault and the cure still lie far down in the heart. "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom"; it is also the beginning of soundness at all the roots of one's thinking and one's behavior.

With an insidiousness too refined to be readily traced, and with effects too far-reaching to be easily credible, a moral and religious malady known as "ungodliness" lies more or less at the hearts of all of us. Like all diseases, it is a thing of degrees, inflicting, in its milder stages, a general debility upon faith and hope, moral sensitiveness, and religious appetite, but in its advanced phases blighting the life itself. The trembling is not the palsy, but the sign of it; the fever is not the poison, but the sign of it; blindness, dumbness, deafness are often enough the outward marks of deeper physical



trouble, and blindness, deafness, in religion, unhappiness, moral paucity, are also, as a rule, to be explained by trouble that may not superficially appear. It was not a man's drunkenness or profanity, his greed or his callousness, his worldliness or his impurity that concerned the older preachers, so much as the submerged and stubborn cause of all this. Therefore they preached to the *ungodly*, and they brought to men the sovereign cure when they preached the gospel as the cure of ungodliness. They would rejoice in a text such as this because, having been faithfully frank in not avoiding the unpleasant word, it joins to it the word of hope, and speaks of "him that justifieth the ungodly."

#### IV

Justification means more than pardon. A criminal may be pardoned with no change having taken place in himself, but the gospel, in proclaiming pardon, proclaims in addition that God so works in the ungodly that the texture of the man's character is changed, until he becomes just and honorable.

But "how can man be just with God?" asks Job, in despair at the immeasurable distance between himself, with all his righteousness, and the perfections of God. In the New

Testament Paul unfolds his gospel of "justification by faith," claiming that a sinful man has been offered a way whereby he can stand before heaven as one who has been not merely forgiven, but as one in whom God is well pleased. In a moment we shall look at the way, but first it is very important to note that between *mere* pardon and justification there is such difference as lies between death and life. Unless in pardoning a man there is an accompaniment of change for the better in himself you have done him little good. One who knows within himself that he is unworthy will find that in that dark knowledge lies what might be called (if the terms are not self-contradictory) a progressive *devolution*; that is, a movement to develop downward, to elaborate unwholesomely. "Give a dog a bad name and he'll live up to it," or down to it, and most destructive of all is it when you have to give yourself a bad name. Let the conviction grow within you that you are an onlooker at virtue, not a participator, and so long as you have it you can do no other than grow your fruits from that seed. Live upon the clemency and mercy of the Judge, as one who, if he got his deserts, would be unable to stand, and the private knowledge of your continued unfitness will make for further disintegrations. But the

message of Paul is better than that. To pardon is added *justification*, whereby the pardoned sinner lives by mercy, indeed, but also by justice. He has stepped upon certain grounds which have altered his character at its root, and while the past is pardoned, the present is justified, honorable, self-respecting, not depending upon the clemency of the judge but knowing the judge has no fault to find.

You will not forget William James' definition: "To be converted, to be regenerated, to receive grace, to experience religion . . . are so many phrases which denote the process, gradual or sudden, by which a self hitherto divided, and consciously wrong, inferior and unhappy, becomes unified and consciously right, superior and happy, in consequence of its firmer hold upon religious realities."<sup>1</sup> The word "consciously" is a potent word here. If a consciousness of being wrong becomes disastrously creative, a consciousness of being right has in it forces of creative *evolution*, tempting to all sublime climbing. If there is a way whereby we may achieve that, let us hear of it.

## V

It is "not by works but by faith." "To

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<sup>1</sup> *Varieties of Religious Experience*, p. 189.

him that worketh not, but believeth, . . . his faith is reckoned for righteousness." Righteousness is not simply the absence of badness, but the positive presence of goodness—and a man's faith in Jesus Christ is reckoned to him for that! How can this be? Because I say, "I believe," does God shut his eyes to facts, and treat me as if I were righteous when he knows very well I am not? That might exhibit magnanimity on the part of heaven, but not honesty. Well, then, does God practically say: "You are a sinner, but I'm not concerned about that. I lay such paramount stress upon belief in Jesus that if you have that, I'll take it instead of the righteousness"? Some might think that that would do honor to Jesus, but few could see what real good it would do to men, whose blessedness lies in the enrichment of personal character, not in faith in Jesus, *unless* that faith brings us genuine personal righteousness, which it does not if it is only mental assent. Or perchance, Zinzendorf's hymn states the solution:

"Jesu, thy blood and righteousness  
My beauty are, my glorious dress;  
Midst flaming worlds, in these arrayed,  
With joy shall I lift up my head."

What precisely do these words mean? I have

heard them used as if, the moment we believe in Jesus, God sees us no more as we really are, but looks at us through the medium of our Lord, as one might look at a scene through a colored glass until all was tinted by it. Thus, whatever may be the truth about us, God, looking at us through the righteousness of Christ, sees us dressed in a glory not our own, and judges us on that. But I think God does not play tricks either with himself or with us; the plain fact is that no man can be made glorious with another's righteousness.

How, then, can a man's faith in Christ "be reckoned for righteousness"? How can it be that such belief makes him a righteous man?

It cannot be unless it be the faith which is a moral activity, drawing with it the assent and cooperation of the entire personality. Sentimentality is not faith. Faith in the Allied Cause during the Great War could not mean neutrality. Faith in Jesus involves acceptance of his view of the seriousness of sin, his view of your value, of life's ethics, of God. It is not dependent upon a certain credulity of mind, nor is a mystical temperament necessary to it. The most practical, unemotional man can say of Christ's view of sin and of God: "Henceforth that is to be mine!" To be "in Christ" means to be in personal sympathy with and

loyalty to him—which, of course, includes a similar attitude to his views.

And it is this faith which is reckoned to a man for righteousness. Yet he knows he continues to be a man of many faults; his exercise of such faith may effect no sudden reformation of his manners conspicuous enough to cause all the world to cry: "Behold, the righteous man!" The judgment of the world is no very serious thing, after all, and God's judgment is that the man is righteous. But why?

## VI

Here we come to that great Pauline doctrine of "imputed righteousness." Again and again Paul comes back to recite a line from the Old Testament: "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted unto him for righteousness." Abraham was as yet inexperienced and untried, how could he be credited with righteousness such as can be proved only in the testing years? A mysterious promise had grown in Abraham's heart, a promise of great inheritance in another land than that of his fathers. Long and fierce hardships and peril might lie between him and his achievement, but the voice that spoke its promise and its call in his heart also offered strength. Then Abraham's whole man-

hood stood up and said, "Yes!" He believed God, he adopted as his that myriad destiny which was offering, and the conditions of it, and behold, all that heroism, endurance, loyalty yet to be displayed as he followed on was immediately "reckoned" unto him. Was it right? Surely; for Abraham was already all that in embryo, and God judged him by his maturity.

Thus is a man estimated when he makes Christ his own; and it is perfectly right. "A man *is* in the truest sense what he wishes to be." God judges us by the object of our faith. In accepting Christ with his promise of vast inheritances and of sustaining grace, a man plants within himself the seeds of a thousand trees of righteousness. Give him time, the trees will come to fruit. The Standard Dictionary says an orchard is "a collection of trees cultivated for their fruit." Not the fruit, then? That in good time, but already an orchard, though very young. The entire "genius" of the trees is right, and the movement is toward fruit; it is an orchard. Our faith in Christ similarly enables God already to call us righteous, for there is wide difference in what is planted in the soil by faith in Christ and what is allowed to gather, weedlike, through indifference to him.

A shipbuilder walks through his yards (to quote an illustration from Wade Robinson)<sup>2</sup> and gazes about him with satisfaction upon the unsightly nuclei of mighty ships. Through their gaping ribs the sky appears; scores of hammers rattle inharmoniously upon them; unshaped, unpolished, they seem little enough able to inspire a poet or encourage hope in a merchant. The shipbuilder, however, looking upon them, beholds them already floating majestic amid summer isles or battling nobly with arctic storms, and in the light of that destiny their present stage of development and the work being done upon them is justified. There is no complaint. Because he sees the end, he sees that all is right. He reckons to them the perfections that are to be. "When God imputes to you the righteousness of Christ, and calls upon you to impute it to yourself, he only asks you to save yourself from the falsehood that you are not like Christ, and to rise into the truth that in the highest sense you are."

Therefore in Christ a man is not as a quarry slave who is relieved of his chains only by the clemency of his master: he is free-born, though only a babe. In Christ a man does not slink through life as a criminal who, if he got his deserts, would be overwhelmed with the divine

<sup>2</sup> *The Philosophy of the Atonement*, p. 61.



displeasure; in the august courts of divine justice he has not to say: "I am a sinner; I am undone; I fling myself upon the mercy of the court." On the contrary, he is able to cry, "My pardon I claim, for a sinner I am, a sinner believing in Jesus' name." And in those solemn courts the voice of the Great Judge answers: "He speaks well, for is it not written: 'To him that worketh not, but believeth in him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness?'"

"To him that worketh not . . .," not by resisting darkness, but by yielding to light; not by frowning energetically against badness, but by smiling calmly toward goodness; not by life's circumference trying to set its house in order by good works, but by life's center chiming with the soul of all goodness by faith; not codes, which are static, but faith in Christ, which is indefinitely creative—this is man's way to conquest, happiness and God. Not by bravely fighting Satan, but by accepting Christ. The "plan of salvation" is as psychologically sound as it is simple.

## SALVATION

(CONCLUDED)

### I

WE should not have failed to see in all this something of the satisfactory nature of our *present* salvation in Christ. Let us not minimize the importance of that or weaken our assurance of it. But just as we saw that salvation is a long reclamation impossible of rapid completion, so, from another angle, it is a process of growth into Christ, and one has only to realize the boundless prospects there for him to appreciate how true is the sense in which he may hesitate to say, "I am saved." When a lady asked, "How may I find the Saviour?" it is conceivable she expected to be informed upon certain "steps to Jesus," as if one should be able to take such steps and arrive. Verily, this finding of the Saviour is a trifling enough thing, it would seem! There are some who lightly speak of it and who, devoted no doubt but not always imaginative, are ever ready to present you with some perfected method of discovery. Yet we must not

shun the challenge of that question: "How may I find the Saviour?"

Observe that scene as Jesus and his disciples emerge from one of the many small villages of Cæsarea Philippi. Behind them is yet another informing experience; before them opens the country; the last lingering straggler ceases to follow them and they settle down to the walk to the next village. The green fields slip quietly to the rear as they journey; one by one the hills draw near, pause a moment, and go. The Master is alone with his disciples.

Have they found the Saviour? Why, yes, surely; they are his disciples; they have been with him now quite a while. But have they found him? Well, if they have not, who has? They have touched him, have left all to follow him. Yes, but have they found him yet? They have verily touched him, and have left all to follow him, and have listened to his wondrous words, and have beheld his mighty deeds; but in the midst of all what has Jesus meant to them? Are they, after all, very deeply different from those old days before he came? Have they indeed found him?

And so, as they walked, he asked them: "Who do men say that I am?" And they told him. The vital question next arrived—it was personal: "But who say ye that I am?" One

can almost see the Master's quick glance into their faces as he spoke, for who could say if he was now about to listen to a repetition of *what they had heard?* Had they accepted ideas from others, or had they come to some of their own? Was their estimate based on hearsay, or on experience? Was he now to be forced to listen dully to the old familiar but lifeless eulogy, great names truly, but said by rote: "Elijah, Jeremiah, one of the prophets"? Had they been long with him and yet had not known him?

At school I was made to study Milton, and he wearied me. Later, because men said he was one of the masters of our language, I felt my duty directing me to him once more, but though I opened his pages again and again it was to lay them down disappointed and uncaptured. "Who do men say that I am?" Milton might have asked, and I could have answered him. "Who do you say?" and I should have been dumb, or else have recited the customary thing. But only a few years ago I "found" him. I argued that reputations of his kind are not made by accident, and that I must know his secret. I shut the door, took him from the shelf and settled down to give him at least one hour undisturbed. Previously he had wearied me in five minutes. On this occasion, in less than fifteen minutes he had flung upon

me his sublime and awe-inspiring spell, and from it I have never escaped. What had forged the key to open that which hitherto had been locked? No doubt previous attempts had helped; and so had my enlarging experience of life and literature; but that arousal of myself to find his secret, that temporary abstraction that I might find him as a pearl of great price, was the final and essential need. Straightway, while Milton now appeared to me as he had appeared to no one else, I could see life and value in all the great descriptions of him that others had made.

It is by a similar way that some pass from hearsay to experience with Jesus. But on this occasion Jesus was wondering if that had yet taken place with his disciples. "But who do ye say that I am?" he asked. And it was Peter who broke into the famous personal confession of faith: "Thou art the Christ!" Here was something living in Peter's voice; no cheap recitation was here. Has he now, then, found the Saviour? If he finds Jesus Christ, he finds the Saviour, for these two are one, and to the extent he finds Jesus Christ he finds the Saviour, and no more. His words have just shown that the significance of Jesus has been growing upon him, and therefore we shall ask, "Has he yet found the Saviour?"

Yes; in the hour when Peter saw for himself that Christ was Lord and Master—not of the world, but *his* Lord and Master—he found the Saviour. Do not judge him too harshly upon his words; he was only an ignorant man, and, after all, he used the words he felt to be most suitable, the words in current use about the Messiah. The words matter little enough. Many have found the Saviour while using radically different words or none at all. The essential thing was Peter's arrival at the moment of intensely personal relations between Jesus and himself. To Peter, Jesus had become First, Best, King, Messiah, Saviour, All. He had found the Saviour.

But what is meant—that he had suddenly discovered an emotion toward him? Not at all; emotion is aside. If he knew emotion, there was a perception that provoked it, and the perception was what mattered. Whenever any man personally sees the significance of Christ in such a manner as to say: "This One must henceforth be my Lawgiver and Companion," he has found the Saviour.

## II

But now, how can the Saviour thus be found? How can this be told when no two men are alike, and when every man must seek accord-

ing to his own way. Some grow to the Lord as the flowers to the light; others doubt, wander, return, finding their way through storms; so different are the manners of our finding.

As general guidance let three things be said: (1) Place your mind where it will be sure of companionship with Jesus; that is to say, in the New Testament, in the House of Christian Worship, in the conversation or book where he dwells. Give your mind an opportunity to know him. (2) Watch against the perversion of judgment and vision by sin, for selfishness finds little knowledge of the Selfless One, the crooked cannot expect companionship with the straight, what communion hath darkness with light? The fuller the values you bring, the more will you possess the secret of learning the "unsearchable riches of Christ." (3) Follow each step as you see it, not waiting until "the distant scene" is all unfolded. One need not say that this will provide certain theological opinions about Jesus, but that it will aid toward discovery of Jesus himself.

### III

And yet there is danger here of talking as if personality were a sort of jewel, a piece of scintillating mineral, lying in a certain place and only to be looked for to be "found." The

stone is found, and that's the end of it. But personality when found is only begun with: you go on forever finding. First there is discovery, and after that, exploration. Though Columbus discovered America, he never saw the great lakes, mighty rivers, mountain chains, rolling prairies of this New World.

Can one presume to say, "I have found Christ"? Can one plunge into the ocean and grasp it with the hands and cry, "I have found the ocean"? Yes, he may; but as a lad paddling in an Australian bay I might have said some such thing, and it would not have been entirely untrue. The day came, however, when I was tossed in storms off the Cape of Good Hope; later I looked out upon the deeply sleeping, slowly heaving, tropic Atlantic, and watched the shining mirror of waters being broken only by the occasional leap of the bonito and the alarmed skimming of the flying-fish; then I observed the moods of the Arctic, where the icebergs grow; again I stood as upon a ship aflame, gazing at the great, red sun as it sank over Africa, boiling the Indian Ocean into gold and vermilion as it went; and, lastly, there was a day when I looked upon the noble Pacific, island studded, coral ridged, gorgeous with marine gardens through whose flowers and branches floated not birds or butterflies but



fish as lovely as either in radiant colors and delicate shapes. And now, tell me, would it have been true if, as a lad paddling in an Australian bay, I had said, never dreaming of all this, "I have found the ocean"? Yes, probably it would—as true as that the disciples had found Jesus during those first months with him. But that is not the sort of knowledge that can inspire a poem like Byron's on "The Ocean"; and the only knowledge of Christ that is our ambition is that which gathers the familiar letters of life's common alphabet and lifts them into a noble poem, infused with noble enthusiasm and singing with noble lyric. And in that sense the disciples had not yet found the Saviour. And in that sense many of his modern disciples who have long been familiar with his words and person have not found him.

It was not long before Peter was shown that though he had found the Saviour he was, in fact, merely paddling in the shallows. Already Jesus is talking to him of the things that appertain to the Christ—the way of sacrifice and service, the endurance of resentment even in its cruelest forms if so be that he might save men from themselves and unto God. At once Peter showed how elementary, after all, was his finding of the Saviour. Christ

—sacrifice!—these two ought not to be brought together; he is a King.

What gulfs still lie between Peter and his Lord, divisions upon quite fundamental ideas of life! Christ's task with Peter now, as with all who have found him, is to teach him to see things differently. "You think the way men think," says Jesus, "not the way God thinks!"<sup>1</sup> And Jesus pronounces Peter's ideas as being of the adversary of our souls. Peter must be taught to see things as God sees them, think as God thinks, disown the viewpoint of worldly men and get the viewpoint of God. For a man to be able to think like that would be salvation, and every temper and idea in him that yields to God's way is evidence of salvation in progress. Once Saint John lifted the veil. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he shall appear *we shall be like him.*" A Saviour indeed, if he makes us Christs!—but not by stamping upon us his image. Rather he arouses the Christ that sleeps in all and guides that Christ at last to completest self-expression, until we are like himself, but uttered through our own gifts and characteristics, our own individuality. And here is his method—the teaching of men to think as God thinks.

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<sup>1</sup> See T. R. Glover: *The Jesus of History*, p. 91.

But that is a long process, and in the meantime one may say that though in some measure he has found the Saviour, he is merely paddling in shallows; he wants the deeps. Perhaps he thinks of Augustine, Wesley, Beecher, desiring an enthusiasm for Christ such as they had.

Very well; when the disciples asked to share with Jesus experiences of coronation and power he answered swiftly by questions concerning their readiness to share also his "cup" and his "baptism." There are prices for what you would have. Beecher gloried in Christ, but that was not cheaply bought. No man may put down a dime and expect to reap a treasury; he cannot laze with hands in pockets and expect to master the mountains. Would you discover an enthusiasm based not upon tricks of temperament or upon mystical facilities, but upon sheer judicial perception of Christ's preeminence—an enthusiasm of the intellect? What price will you pay? There are moral prices of subordination to Christ's spirit and law, and there are intellectual prices of examination and analysis of him and of his place in world affairs. Therefore, are you prepared to study economics until you find that the only healing influences among them all are such as have made Galilee forever beloved? Will you turn to international affairs and see

the nations at their wits' ends and find that the only things that are shaping toward permanence and which are promising any dawn amidst the darkness are the cry for peace, the demand for brotherhood and justice, the things of Jesus? And will you renounce the Christian faith as not for you and say, "I shall find a religion of my own"? And, having found it, will you not write it down that you may look upon it, and so begin to see with amazement that in essence it is Christianity after all? The Christian ethic, the Christian idea of God, and the Christian regard for man are things that must not be absent from any religion that is likely to feed the soul. Always we thrust him aside and go our way, to find him standing in our path. It is this discovery of how inescapable he is, of how he indeed is the Saviour, the Way, the Truth, the Life, that lifts one's enthusiasms high above the realm of the traditional or the conventional, establishing them upon those sound and very satisfying bases that are found in a personal perception of truth. Howbeit, this is achieved by diligence: such assessments of Christ can only follow upon diligent comparisons, examinations, and measurements. It is a great road, leading high; all who have in any measure found the Christ are upon it; some are farther along than others.

Though for all the direction is the same, some by quicker travel come to the greater explorations earlier.

## IV

In the meantime, here and now, there is, for every one of us, this: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and thou shalt be saved." He stands for a certain philosophy of life—do you believe in that? He stands for a particular interpretation of God—do you believe in that? He stands for an evaluation of man—do you believe in that? In the elections you are asked which man you believe in; you consider all each man stands for, and you cast your vote. Whom do you believe in; Christ? Mohammed? Mammon? Mars? Bacchus? Do you believe in Big Business? Big Learning? Big Enjoyment? "Believe on *the Lord Jesus Christ* and thou shalt be *saved*." For salvation is not some gift to be had hereafter, nor is it a complete thing which God gives to us upon our fulfillment of certain conditions. Rather it is a reclamation of life from selfish and materialistic living; it begins the moment the centers of our life are rightly adjusted; it continues indefinitely, in this world and the next. The right adjustments come when men "believe on

the Lord Jesus Christ." If you will not bring your personality to deliberate affirmation of the moral and spiritual attitudes of Jesus, you may describe yourself as "lost," for declining him you are affirming in yourself the forces of moral and spiritual decay and blindness. Dogma and detail aside, we have seen nothing higher than Christ. Henceforth no man can ignore him without being unfaithful to light; but no man can affirm him in the centers of life, believe in him, without at once discovering that health, that redemption, and that reconciliation with God and with man, which are "the salvation which is in Christ Jesus," and which have ever spread wide the white wings of God's "good news" to the children of men.

## THE CHURCH

### I

FOR some years it has been a cheap and popular pastime to abuse the church. Intellectuals have flung at her their polished javelins, some of which have struck deep; many whips have been made for less skillful hands to wield, and their vicious hiss has been heard in the streets. Even the rabble have assailed her, counting no sanctity too white to discourage their verbal mud. Very much of this has been as unseemly as the spittal of a toad directed at the moon, which both leaves unsoiled the fair Queen of Night and publishes the whereabouts of toadishness. Reasons for renouncing the church have often been of a kind either to shake all the gods on Olympus with hilarity or reduce them to tears at man's poverty of invention. "I have given up going to church; there are too many hypocrites there."

"Oh, don't let that prevent you: there's room for one more!"

But some of the charges have been seriously leveled. We are charged with being conserv-

ative and bigoted, the enemies of new light and fuller truth; on the other hand, with being devoid of vital faith in the things we preach; with having so lowered the standard of life demanded of a follower of Christ that it is no longer possible to see whether a man be a follower or not. It is said that we have resolved Christian character into questions of social caution, guarded pastimes, and church attendance, but have omitted the weightier matters of honor in business, gentleness in the home, purity in society, fairness in sport; that we have pandered to wealth and patronized the poor, rebuked sin in the gutter and ignored it in the parlor, been swift to see industrial selfishness when made unlovely by the sweat and coarse clothes of a class that cannot claim great possessions, but singularly insensible to it when it is dressed in the refinements of wealth and power; we are charged with taking our religion easily, so that it means little to us and costs us less, and with therefore having lost the spirit of daring and of sacrifice. Some of these are serious charges, and I, for one, lest I should be guilty of repudiating lightly indictments that should rather bring me penitential to my knees, will strive to remember before them and apply to myself Cromwell's exasperated appeal to the Scotch Parliament: "I beseech



you, by the mercies of God, to consider that you might sometimes be wrong.”

And yet, as one who knows churches and church folks at least as well as many of their critics, I protest that blemish and paralysis and narrowness and bias are by no means the whole truth about them, nor is this the truth that is most characteristic of them. One becomes gentler in his judgments as his knowledge of life improves. He can see that the church is made up of human beings, and that always means imperfection. He can see that the church is not doing its work unless it is gathering to itself the imperfect, the weak, the halt, the maimed, the blind, nursing the broken-hearted, supporting those who stumble. I know the commercialized business man comes to church: thank God he does, it is the only place he can find where commercialism weakens. I know the narrow and bigoted are found there, though by no means only there, and they are made a little bigger by contact with eternal things. The lapsed are found there too, and are in the way of being restored. Insipid and uninteresting folk are present, gathered out of many gray and dull places, their poor lives yielding up a little of their gray and taking a little better color as they hear the great truths that make the rich romance of living. Also

there come the great souls of the community, the noble dreamers, the eager hands that would serve. And, I have found, these people are not flippant; they are deeply in earnest; they mean business. It is not the church but the thing they find there that brings them, something which picture shows never supply, which books are inadequate for, which is found nowhere else. And men come from their gloom, their cruelty, their ugliness and crookedness, knowing more than ever you can tell them of their baseness and all that, and sick of heart because of it; but they come strangely hungering for the beauty and the sweetness of the Lord. They take their little particles of him and go hence—to forget, maybe, in the swirl of things, but not quite to escape—bearing a little added flavor in life's common things, a flavor that is not unfamiliar to such as lingered with Christ in that Galilæan land of flowers where he was the fairest, purest, strongest, bravest of all, and a flavor which is quickly recognized again wherever it is met in street or home or shop.

## II

The story of Jesus could not die. If the church should fail to lift him up, another way

would be found. But then any other organization doing that would be a church, and still, I can imagine, it would not be perfect. We have this treasure in earthen vessels. The thing of paramount moment, however, is the treasure. For this treasure is a living thing and giveth life unto the world, and, of all things else, men need it! The church's right to live abides only so long as she "guards the deposit," Christ, intrusted to her, making him always available to the world.

Can a forest of firs renounce its type and become a grove of palms? Such an experiment would banish the spirit of life from the forest and would lead, by folly and confusion, to a death which would not have even the dignity of a petrified forest, which at least is true to type even in death. The Church of Jesus Christ remains true to type only by preserving the centrality of Christ. The Spirit's business is the expounding of the things of Christ, not of another—no, not of Bergson, nor of Karl Marx, nor of H. G. Wells, nor of another, though all these are in place in the church when they are made to assist the Spirit in his unfolding of the Christ. Christ will forever increase and change, though he will be the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Underneath all that the centuries bring, the church, if it is to remain

Christian, must preserve the Christ as its Root. This idea of the Christ-root tempts examination, being full of suggestion.

There are those who point out to us that the Christ of the modern church has no counterpart in history; that we have so worked over the original figure of the Nazarene that it is no longer possible for any man to say what part of the picture ever lived and what part has been acquired by centuries of devotion; that we really adore an apotheosis of Jesus, a conception approximating much more closely the idealism of the race rather than anyone who ever walked in Galilee. Hence, "Who is Christ?" we are asked, and "How shall we know any more the original?"

But any tree, while depending vitally upon its root, yet holds within itself much that the root never knows. There is water present, for instance, in a quantity such as the root could never have held. As the root throws its life up into the tree, it draws from sod and air and sun myriad qualities with which it did not begin, and yet who will say of the tree, "Thou art false! or, perchance, an illusion"? Conceivably you will say, "Until I can draw some line of demarcation between the original root and what has been acquired, I shall not be satisfied." Who ever drew lines of demarca-

tion in things that live? Who can separate between spirit and body, or mind and brain, or the things which the root began with and the things it has acquired? Life has ever this mystery! We seek in vain its solution. But in the day when I would seek rest from the sun's burning, or would cut me timber for a house, I will forget my speculations, and, seeking the tree, will accept of it all it can give.

Because there is something eternally living in Christ, he is the continually increasing Christ. If it be true that he has added to himself things that make his present picture difficult to reconcile with the features of him of Galilee, we can only answer: "Nineteen hundred years and more have gone; what else does one expect? For he lives!" Jesus has shown the power to collect about him the idealism of a world. Man's highest, tenderest dreams have somehow woven themselves into his garments, and he has worn them as a king for whom such robes are natural. He has been a wondrous magnet, drawing the best out of men to himself, and himself growing larger by what he thus gathers. Thus he is not merely the Christ of the Gospels; he is larger, as a tree is larger than its root. But this Tree which is Christ is as real as the Root which was Jesus. Without the Root there could have

been no such Tree; yet no longer will men be able to disentangle the elements of the developed Tree from the elements of the original Root. Was slavery abolished because of the ethic of Jesus or because of the improved conscience of the race? Do we thank Jesus for the improved status of women or do we thank advancing civilization? Are our ideas of God gentler because the times are so or because Jesus taught us so? Surely, it is apparent that in none of these can we draw confident distinctions and say, "On this side is Christ, and on that is some other." Rather we shall say in answer to each of the questions, as one might answer if asked whether the root or some other part explains the blossoms on the tree, "Both!"

Howbeit, in the hour when I am beaten by angry winds and need shelter, burned by the sun and need shade; in the day when my heart is breaking and no man gives me consolation, when, spent in moral strength and sick in spirit, I need refuge and support and healing, then I shall not remember my speculations, but shall resort to that Tree whose leaves in all the centuries have proved themselves to be set for the "healing of the nations." When I would find timbers to build me "more stately mansions" that my manhood may escape

from its littleness and penury and lift its towers into fairer skies, I shall not pause until the mystery of the tree is solved. Rather I shall seek its ample boughs, that I may take therefrom the only timbers that can nobly build a man. There is enough in our Lord Jesus Christ to exercise the intellect of man for generations yet, and—who knows—forever! But in the meantime, the glad meantime, there abides in him all that the heart and spirit of man may need for their healing, and their up-building.

### III

Once, jostled among men in the narrow streets of Milan—not finding there, amidst unlovely scenes, much to woo the heart to affection for humankind—I escaped into the great Cathedral and mounted by stairways to the roof. Looking down from the roof upon the city, I began to find it possible to acquire a better perspective. Little houses no longer overshadowed me, narrow streets no longer cramped me, and unlovely examples of humanity no longer shuffled past, jostling me as they went. I was seeing the city from above, and humanity too. Seeing it thus, I began to realize that if I would know humanity I must

estimate it in the light of this Cathedral upon which I stood, one of humanity's vastest symbols, an outward and visible sign of what was really man. For wrought into this Cathedral was humanity at its best, and as it loves to be, its dreams and hopes and aspirations, its devoted labor, its sense of God. Thus the dignity of man, hidden in the streets, became impressively apparent in the Cathedral. In this mood I raised my eyes to behold, far beyond the confines of the city, outlined against the sky, closing the distant view, Mount Blanc, Queen of the Alps! In a moment her white forehead, resting there against heaven, had carried my thoughts from man to God.

It seems to me that this is what Christ is always doing for us. In him we recover noble estimates of man; in him also we see the wide horizons and find God. If it be true that the centuries have wrought into the Cathedral Christ more than was present originally in Galilee, this only makes him more truly than ever the highest personification of humanity and of divinity. In Christ humanity still climbs highest, and divinity still draws nearest.

John the Divine saw seven golden candlesticks, representing the church, and in the midst, *in the midst* of the church, where we must forever keep him, One like unto a son of



man. Here is simplicity itself, reminding one of the exquisite charm of the Master who walked with men as one of them, and spoke our human tongue on many a windy hillside and amid the rustling of golden corn, and who poured out a human heart in prayer beneath the Syrian stars. But John makes this son of man say immediately, "I am the first and the last." This is always the puzzle. He says things that only God ought to say, talks of ultimates and identifies himself with them. Yet somehow he is right, and one day we will see how. But in the meantime what can we do? What else is there to do, for one who ponders the mystery and bright, warm beauty of the Lord, except to do as did John, who, gazing, "fell at his feet as one dead."

This, at the feet of the Master, is the only place for the church if she is to retain her inward inspiration, her vision, and her saving message to mankind. We shall not pretend she has lost it, but neither shall we say that she may not make it more conscious and devoted.

## THE CHURCH

(CONCLUDED)

### I

FROM such thoughts as these concerning the church and its mission one turns back to the world in which we live, asking himself, doubtfully, "Have I been dreaming—or waking?" These values of the church seem to be little enough realized if they be true! Where there is not actual antagonism toward the church there is widespread indifference, and in multitudes there is an attitude much like that toward an old heirloom. For sentimental reasons it may still be allowed its place on the shelf, but no one will suspect it of possessing utility, and it will be forgotten except when it gets in the way.

Yet, if count could be made, probably it would be found that no organization under heaven gathers within itself such a weight of first-class intellect as does the Church of Christ. A house burning, however, always arrests more attention than a house building, and the destructive critic is usually more heard and published than the constructive. The

superior, and often more than half contemptuous, attitude of some intellectuals to the church has had much influence in the world, and is the more regrettable because it is often uninformed. It is time some things were said very frankly concerning this.

After all, the merely scientific mind is not the authority on those religious matters for which the church stands. Ability in biology or history is no smallest qualification for apprehension of God, who, being a Spirit, can be laid hold of no more by scientific learning than a physical hand can lay hold of a thought. This is not always realized, and proficiency in chemistry has given sufficient encouragement to some men to pronounce upon religion. How eager certain men of much knowledge of some things seem to be to show how little they know of others! How pathetically the same brain can carry side by side the giant idea and the pigmy notion! What feeble caricatures of religious truth can beset the mind of even the scholar, and how religiously behind his times can be the man who is possibly ahead of them in knowledge physical!

Thank God for learning; it is helping to emancipate the world; but many things are hidden from the wise and prudent and revealed to babes. Many an illiterate Negro woman

will annoy us with her obstinate "superstition" that will not yield to our conclusive proofs. Back of the "superstition" there is an experience which she mangles in phrasing, but what then? Is she to forego the living and burning center of all life at the impatient and undiscerning behest of some materialistic scholar? She has an experience that is a closed world to him and, in so far as she can understand his high-sounding scorn and protest, she knows in her simple way that he is talking dogmatic ignorance. Across many centuries comes a voice: "Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? . . . If I take the wings of the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me and thy right hand shall hold me!" Millions of the world's choicest in brain and soul have shared that experience.

When a broad-based, robust, positive soul, knowing whom it has believed, is met by a sort of spindle-shanked spiritual emasculation squeaking shrill denial, I am reminded of a man I heard of in France. He had been a politician before getting into khaki, and evidently had acquired the habit of delivering himself with equal authority upon any and every subject—a task to be cautiously undertaken by any man. Having versed himself in all the military text-

books he could get hold of, he became convinced that the war was not being won because of inherent falsity in the military methods. He arrived in France imbued with a mission of adjustment and reformation. I forget what became of him, but they used to talk about him in the brigade. He came as a tenderfoot late to the war to teach veterans who had lived for years immersed in all the fierce experience of fighting, who had found the falsity of the textbooks three years before he arrived, who had adjusted and reformed and reformed and adjusted in more ways than he had dreamed, and who knew all his pallid little expatiations about war lacked only one thing—some first-hand knowledge of the thing he talked about! Those men could not stop to argue with him, not merely because they were busy but because it is rather futile to seek to convince a man who lacks experience. When a man *knows* through having dwelt where shells are bursting, paper theories and contradictions do seem a little sickly! Like Diogenes waving Alexander aside, we may well request such men to stand from between us and the sun!

## II

Probably more potent than this attitude of a few intellectuals as a foil to the church's

work and influence are such practical counter-attractions as the modern picture show, automobile, and the not modern but now more accessible charm of God's out-of-doors. In accepting this last to a neglect of "the assembling of ourselves together" in a church, there are many who claim that they lose nothing thereby in spiritual values. "Where two or three are gathered together in my name there am I in the midst of them," quotes the church. "But I understood," these answer, "that God was everywhere. 'In the midst of *them*': yes, but is he not also in the midst of the hills and the flowers and the stars, and may not one find him as easily by climbing the hills as by coming to church? Is he more in one place than in another, that we should seek him there?"

While we grant the accessibility of God anywhere, it may be well for us to face the huge amount of insincere speech made concerning these meetings with him in nature. "It does me more good to be out in the air and the sunlight than to sit in a gloomy church where nobody thinks of anything but hats and dresses." That anyone should be capable of such a conception of church life reasons sad need of grace from some quarter! If one indeed finds God out of doors, he speedily comes to a

juster estimate of his brethren. But is it God who is found, or æsthetics? Is the tonic physical or spiritual? Granted the disentangling cannot be achieved so easily, is not the *spiritual* benefit a little over-reported? What is the issue in character and service? After all, if one is finding God anywhere, the fact ought to be written beyond dispute in one's behavior. Though God is everywhere, and everywhere is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him, it is doubtful whether even the theory is sound that he may be found "*just as well*" in nature as in church. But in practical experience, to what extent do the majority desire to find God out of doors? And to what extent are the deposits in their lives actually moral and religious? When in the community a wholesome reform is needed and men are called to the standard, do we find that those who come because they have been learning to see life from the moral standpoint of God, and to feel for men with the earnest solicitation of God, are chiefly the men who have indifferently neglected the church while spending Sunday elsewhere? Do not misconceive this point: it is not that all virtue is the church's and all helpfulness. But it is an emphasis of the practical experience of life, namely, that we do not find that non-churchgoers discover the rest of heart, or the

high direction of life, or the wholesome devotion to the cause of God and man which come by genuine life with God.

The explanation of the Sunday exodus to the country is not to be found chiefly in a search for God. His mystic presence is everywhere, but he is more readily discoverable in some places than in others. It may be true that he is present in any company of men, but it is in the midst of disciples gathered together in his name that he is most likely to be discovered. He is present everywhere, but there is a "special presence," that is to say, there are places and times when he is specially realized. God was at Bethel before Jacob arrived and while he dwelt there unconscious of anything divine. Yet there came to Jacob an experience which made him say: "Lo, God was in this place and I knew it not." When it is so often quoted that "Earth's crammed with heaven and every common bush afire with God," it is apparently assumed that everybody sees him. Yet the poet continues: "But only he who sees takes off his shoes; the rest sit round it and pluck blackberries." Presence! how little that signifies to some! But, as I am about to point out, while God is present no more in the church than on the sea or the great plains, in the church are certain helpful factors absent else-



where, and by these the presence of God is made specially realizable.

### III

The first of these factors is *the company* which, gathered in One Name, is sympathetic, partaking of the same spirit and desire. What then, happens? "There is a common telepathic pull which increases the responsiveness of each." We have seen men of calm blood roused to madness in a crowd by some destructive idea that has possessed it; such is the power of the massed mind. What shall we say, then, of the uplifting and enlarging power of a large company splendidly possessed with the search for God? If but half an audience is gathered with sincere desire to commune with God, one may guarantee, in the name of Heaven, and of the pure constraints of united spirit, that the varying degrees of carelessness and deadness in the other half will break down before the hour of worship is over. If every day I am compelled to submit, whether I like it or not, to influences cast about me from other souls, and if often those influences are drowsing to my nobler instincts, will you not admit that I am not fair to my own soul if I deny it the stimulating company of men and women aim-

ing Godward? Siren voices and voices celestial are always singing. If there are a thousand influences that quicken my hearing of the lower, how great a treasure will be that company which is able to wrap its sympathetic mind about me until my hearing of the higher is arrested, and aroused!

In the second place, the church garners and carries onward the inspiration of *the ages*. From the wide fields of the past treasures are gathered and cast into the lap of the present. Chaff indeed comes with the wheat, and that we are busily blowing away by the help of God. But there is bread from the past, and it may not be too much to say that he who proclaims his entire independence of the past and sets himself to feed his soul only on what he can rear on his own little acreage, will die before his sowing can come to maturity. What would you do with a statesman who declined to learn from Edmund Burke and John Stuart Mill and all the masters of statecraft from the time of Rome and Athens? You would say he was either a madman or a prig, and you would refuse him your vote because you would feel you could not trust such insolently independent strutting in a responsible position. And what would you say of a youth who, setting out to learn the wizard's art of making sculptured

beauty rise lifelike from a block of marble, began by refusing to study Phidias and Praxiteles and Michelangelo, with the wealth of experience that those names represent.

What, then, will you say of a man who finds himself the inheritor of personal powers he must learn to govern, and of a crude, unshapen soul from which he should cause to arise a character after the likeness of a god, but who deems himself sufficient for the task and so snubs the *spiritual* statecraft and sculpture of the past? Nearly two thousand years of the Christian era, two thousand years of experience with Christ, two thousand years of thinking, loving, serving, of the thrilling university of Life, whence each generation learns some new syllable and passes it down into the ever-enlarging treasury of the next—twenty centuries of it, and what will you say of the man who thinks he can ignore it and prosper? In the church the ages are focused. We read them in the Scriptures, we sing them in the hymn-book; they utter themselves through the pulpit. While *numbers* facilitate more sensitive response to God, the giant saints and brains of *the past* are pressing the immortal part of themselves upon us, giving our response intelligence and direction, warning, advising, calling, encouraging. It is one phase of the “communion of

saints," which is scarcely to be had except in the Church of God.

The third factor is the preacher. We gladly admit that God expresses himself in a sunset or in a breaking wave, but God's greatest facility of self-expression is through a person. The higher the type—the more excellent the medium for God. For this reason Jesus is the best revelation of God we know. Ethically and religiously, Jesus is the supreme Master, able to lay his commands upon the centuries, because, as he said, "The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself, but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." Back of Jesus and through him, was God!

God's methods do not change. Still he possesses men and through them shows himself better than anywhere else. I must say that, unless my conception of the preacher's office is wrong, the preacher should be the most arousing and compelling revelation of God the wide world holds. Allowing for faults of learning and ability, for errors of judgment and slips in behavior, the man whose life is dedicated to the highest, who dwells much with thoughts and with masters who teach him to see life from the pinnacles; to whom, isolated upon the summits of the soul, the jangling voices of the moment become a distant murmur, as in the

awful silence he hears the solemn and unhastening tramp of God's permanencies; to whom, his spirit thrilling to fragments of God's primal music as they rise above earth's discords, there is audible the Voice that speaks only when men are able to hear, pouring into his heart messages that provoke and burn and impassion until he knows he has heard things it is not possible for a man to utter: I say that that man, when he has come down from the mount, will make no apology for his message, nor will he ask you if you will hear, but he will speak as one having authority, and he will proceed to cast out devils that would yield to no one else. If the preacher has enabled God to possess him, it is not the preacher who persuades his audience; it is God. The mystic presence discoverable among the hills? Yes; but if the preacher is doing his work faithfully (one must write almost in an agony of self-reproof!) when *he* is done the lesser discovery will pale before the vaster revelation, until the congregation retires with hushed voices saying, "I have seen an incarnation of God!"

## CHARACTER

### I

WHATEVER to the contrary may be supposed in some quarters, words like "repression," "emaciation," "paucity" are not typically Christian. Christianity as Christ represents it, never makes for contraction in either man's work or man's play, in his intellect or in his worship.

Such words as "amplitude," "plentitude," "expansion," "abundance" are far more sympathetic to Christ and the effects wrought by his influence. "*Life*" is our Lord's supreme word: he poured it into poor spent bodies as he went; he roused it into drooping faith; he quickened the intellect; he found broken hearts which, under the afflictions of the world, had not been able to hold their treasures, and he gently took them, and bound them, and made of them chalices brimming again with life; he found religion in his day entombed in precise and rigid externalism and ritual, and with the authority of the very Lord of Life he called it to resurrection.

To increase life is his enthusiastic employ-

ment, as if he knew that the ache at the world's heart, the bitterness, the complaint, is always, whether it is so understood or not, from the absence of life.

The great Master's mission was the making of men, their enrichment unto life, and life abundant. Under his influence men grow and amplify, the type enhances, the unpronounced manhood lifts itself into vivid self-expression.

## II

If we are to appreciate how Christ accomplishes this, we will do well to inquire of the nature of "life." Perhaps the old and imperfect definition used long ago by Drummond may not refuse us some help: "Life is correspondence with environment." Eyes that do not see are dead; the paralyzed arm is unable to correspond with its environment; intellectual life unfolds more and more as the intellect is related to wider realms of truth; the soul is dead to the extent in which it has lost correspondence with God. A characteristic of life everywhere seems to be capacity for interaction with environment.

Man lives in a world wherein his environment is both human and divine. That which cripples his correspondence with either to that extent

diminishes his life. Therefore the effort of Jesus is to bring men into right relations with both. Men inveterately believe that life's prizes are to be found in selfishness, and, in their pursuit of pleasure or of possessions, they strain all effort to serve their own selves. Nothing under heaven is harder to break than that infatuation. And yet by the experience of long, long centuries of depleted and disillusioned humanity, selfishness is narrowing to enjoyment, deflating to exhilaration; and, instead of life, it leaves only ashes. But care for mankind, an acceptance of responsibility to our fellows—not the pagan disowning of our brother but the Christian assent to our being his keeper—this widens the area of our interests and of our enthusiasms, tempts life to ever wider expansions and never lets it pall. It is by such correspondence with our human environment that we live with life more abundant.

But there is our divine environment, God, in whom "we live and move and have our being." To lose God is to be left with a world—and nothing more! Remove from Wordsworth that "something far more deeply inter-fused," and the light will have died from his sunsets, the music from his waterfalls, the mystery from his hills; the world will have become a machine and its explorers merely a



tribe of skilled mechanics. One needs God for the romance of living. As the soul increases in correspondence with him it increases in exuberant life.

### III

Therefore Jesus gives his attention to correcting correspondences, for he is anxious to have men live, and live abundantly. He approaches the problem differently from others, and his voice sounds as a new thing among his people. Familiar with Moses and his negatives, and with his stressing of behavior, they were not quick to realize the world of difference between the familiar code of laws and the method of Jesus. Neither are we. Too often have we represented the Master as concerning himself with words and actions, with the things we do or leave undone. Too often, again, we have conceived the Christian ethic to be chiefly "Don't"; but that is rather Mosaism. Imagine Saul of Tarsus asking Jesus the way of life and being told to abstain from committing robbery and murder. He might reply: "I have abstained from these and many other things all my life, but still I have an empty heart." So Jesus says: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case

enter into the kingdom of heaven"; that is, unless your righteousness be superior in kind.

For the kingdom of heaven is not negative but positive; "Thou shalt love," says Christ. Neither is it external—a code of laws to be obeyed. On the contrary, it is a spirit, a temper, a relationship. "Thou shalt *love*," says Christ, but love is a condition of the spirit, which, though indeed expressed in behavior, is not itself behavior. But of this key Christian word, Dr. Richard Roberts<sup>1</sup> makes this timely utterance: "There is little more urgent in the interests of sound thinking and clear speech than some rehabilitation of this word '*love*,' its rescue from the slough of saccharine sentimentalism and its recognition as the generic name of those human impulses which constitute the many-colored energy of social cohesion." And he strengthens this by quoting Professor Rauschenbusch who defines love as "No flickering or wayward emotion, but the energy of a steadfast will bent on creating fellowship." In that definition Rauschenbusch has achieved something almost classic; the terms of it deserve to be returned to and separately weighed, so much significance attaches to each. "Thou shalt love," insists Christ, and such insistence is neither negative nor external.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Red Cap on the Cross*, p. 62.

Neither are other great words of the Christian gospel—such a word, for instance, as “reconciliation.” Like “love” it is not descriptive of action but of attitude; action may express reconciliation or love but it was the spirit behind action that Jesus sought to correct, and until that was corrected a man was not saved—no, not though he polished his behavior as a sculptor might perfect his marble, leaving it when he had done all, neither warm nor breathing. Christ’s Sermon on the Mount should never be hardened into legislation; rather it is a series of councils and illustrations, seeking, from many angles, to inculcate the same spirit. Obedience to rule can rapidly grow mechanical and fail to touch the spirit. “Thou shalt not kill,” said the law. “It is inadequate,” says Jesus; “if you nurse anger, you are guilty.” “Thou shalt not commit adultery,” said the law, and it was echoed by the scribes and Pharisees. “If you carry lustful intentions,” says Jesus, exceeding the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, “you have committed adultery already in your heart.” You see how he passes to the realm of spirit and reason, and demands that *there* the man shall fight his battles and win his victories, for *there* is character and not in the outward performance of religious or social demands.

Thus does Jesus endeavor to adjust relations between man and his environment, human and divine. "I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly," he says. Precisely; he that will learn of Jesus already begins to move into more abundant life. There is a fuller arousal of the man; in the midst of fields of inertia a pulse begins to beat.

But there are phases in the ensuing development. They cannot be disentangled, for they grow together, and each becomes increasingly marked as the man comes more under the law of Christ, which is love, and "love," be it remembered, "is the energy of a steadfast will bent on creating fellowship."

#### IV

It may not be correct to say that man in Christ becomes a law unto himself, for he must live under the reign of the law of right relationships, which, properly speaking, is a spirit, a temper. But he lives no longer under any other law. None can legislate for him; rules and codes exist for him no longer. Possessing the spirit of Christ, his one business comes to be exposition of the requirements of that spirit in the presence of each new situation as it arises; he administers the law of the Spirit. The judge on his bench does not make the

laws but he administers them, arbitrating as each new case is brought before him. For the Christian man there is but one law, and in its light each case is arbitrated upon as it comes. This privilege is denied to two—the child and the man untuned to Christ.

1. The child, either in years or in development, cannot be intrusted with this law. The learning of the divine art of right living must begin much as that of any other art. Years ago Sir John R. Seely put this so well that he may be quoted: "For the beginner rigid rules are prescribed, which it will be well for him for a time to follow punctiliously and blindly. He may believe that under these rules a principle is concealed, that a reason could be given why they should be followed, but it is well for a time that the principle should remain concealed and that the rules should be followed simply because they are prescribed. At any rate, so long as he actually has not discovered the principle, he must abide strictly by the rules, and it would be foolish to abandon them in order to go in search of it. But there comes a time when the discovery is made, a golden moment of silent expansion and enlargement. Then the reason of all the discipline to which he has submitted becomes clear to him, the principle reveals itself and makes the confused

and ill-apprehended multitude of details in a moment harmonious and luminous. But the principle at the same moment that it explains the rules supersedes them. They may not be less true than before, they may be seen to be true far more clearly than before. But they are obsolete; their use is gone; they can for the future tell only that which is already well known, which can never again be forgotten or misunderstood.”<sup>1</sup>

2. The man who has not sincerely adopted the law of Christ must not demand its privileges. Many a man claims for himself a liberty of decision and arbitration which is entirely without justification unless the temper of his life recognizes that he is here to be a saviour.

The judges of this country are privileged to administer the laws of the United States, not of France or of Mexico; neither must they administer according to their own feelings or prejudices or interests, but only according to the laws of the land. You must not claim the privileges of Christ unless you are Christ's; you have no freedom to do as you like until you have accepted that higher attitude to God and man which lies at the back of all good laws; you must not claim liberty and then proceed to administer not Christ's law of love, but your own law of selfishness. The world would

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<sup>1</sup> *Ecce Homo*, p. 222.

never be safe in granting you this freedom. And yet it can grant it in security to the men of goodwill and of helpfulness, for "love is the fulfilment of the law," and more than the law's demands will be fulfilled.

Law may fill the cup up to the prescribed measure, but love will overflow it; the hireling serves the house within the limits of certain hours and wages, but the housewife supplants all limits with interest in her home, and because she loves serves happily without stint; even the nurse can grow impatient with unreasonable impositions upon her strength, but whoever heard of anxious love growing weary, or complaining at the lengthened hours, or resenting the endless tasks? Law says, "I have done a fair day's work; no man can ask more of me than this." Love asks what more it can do. Jesus was conscious of these differences, and showed how while duty is satisfied when you give your coat, love's impulse is to give the cloak also; how, when the law demands that you must go a mile and is fulfilled when you have done it, love swings along the road, singing and unbegrudging, and has finished two miles ere it realizes.

In the measure in which this is the spirit of your life you may accept your freedom and administer your own law. But otherwise, not!

## V

We said that correspondence with environment was one of the marks of life, and we have seen that Jesus aimed to effect such correspondence. By making love the guiding temper of character he showed us that which leads from life to life. The difficulty of continually renewed adjustment to circumstances and of ever-varying application of the law of right relations, or love, to each new case as it arises, taxes and searches and thus develops the individual. But that is what Christ came to do—to produce *life*.

But now we have reached a point where we can look for a moment at another definition of life—Bergson's:

“Life is freedom asserting itself within necessity, turning it to its profit.”

The dead body is, shall we say, necessitated by physical and chemical laws; we know exactly what will happen to it. But when life is present, it stands up amid this reign of law, or of necessity, and, without altering any law, asserts itself as superior, *learns how to use law to maintain and enlarge life*, and proves its own freedom to such an extent that now no one can forecast what will happen. No one knew better than Christ that the great lawgivers of



the centuries have been right, yet none knew better than he that man can lie dead, imprisoned in laws not any one of which he may break. No room for enterprise, originality, or surprise: "faultily faultless, icily regular, splendidly null—dead perfection!" He called men to Life: "Life is freedom asserting itself within necessity, turning it to its profit." Christ stands up amid the inexorable legalism of Judaism. It is life asserting itself within necessity. He will not "destroy the law" but neither will he consider whether he obeys it, any more than Byron will pause to see if he is keeping in step with the requirements of good poetry. The poet will not count his syllables as a mere versifier might; being a poet, he will have no need. Christ, having the spirit that fulfills the law, is not anxious about codes. He is free amid necessity, for the law is as permanent as God's throne, but he is free in the midst of it because he has the spirit of life. Then he proceeds to show his freedom by using the eternal laws where others are simply controlled by them. As Life stands up free amid *physical* laws, selects them, combines them and then rides in triumph on the clouds because they serve him; as Life takes the laws of sound, which may not be altered, arranges and associates them into unusual service of his com-

mands until they sing in oratorio; so Life, the Life that Jesus has taught us how to have abundantly, asserts itself *free* within the unalterable laws of duty. If to stand free amid the laws, and overrule them, and teach them to serve a spirit higher than themselves is *life*—if that is life, I can see why Jesus said, “I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly.”

There is no flat convention here, no previous assurance of what will happen. On the contrary, no one can forecast what a Christian man will do, for life runs upon no iron rails of precedent. When he has finished with the moral laws he will have outsoared all that was ever dreamed of, he will have awakened a melody unheard before. The Christian character is thus one of colorful originality, of daring enterprise, of startling innovation. With unwarrantable departure from custom, he will invent a bill for the abolition of slavery; with scandalous indifference to whether it is written in the law or not, he will protest that wars must cease; though the law says he must not hurt his neighbor's business, he actually will conceive the insane dream of helping his neighbor's business even at the expense of his own; though the law commands him to keep his social life clean, he will commit the extravagance

of foregoing on occasion his legitimate pleasure that he might help his neighbor to keep *his* life clean. It may not seem reasonable, nor according to law; it is according to law, though an unwritten law. It is Life, the abundant Life, free and superior to law because it swallows up the law in fullness as day swallows up the dawn. Under the law personality flows, like the Colorado River, chafing within high but narrow restraints. "I came that they may have life," says Jesus, and life flows like the Nile within the banks and over the banks, knowing not where its banks begin or end but carrying broad fertility and nourishment to everything it touches.

## VI

"This is *my* commandment, that ye love one another." As though he had said: "Moses gave his name to Ten Commandments, and they had to do with behavior; I give my name to one, and it neglects behavior and deals with the spirit; yet, like all the colors in the one golden light, all virtues lie in my one command to love." No one can know the New Testament and suppose that Jesus ever meant that this temper of his could be shared by us without the open doors to heaven which he himself so carefully kept free. He knew, as we do

too, that he who would carry mankind in his heart must carry the Father also. Right relationships with men nourish right relationships with God; and, on the other hand, he who neglects to entertain the Heavenly Guest will soon find his entertainment of Humanity artificial and forced. Jesus has but one basis for Christian character: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, . . . and . . . thy neighbor as thyself," and, that we may be clear in our thinking, let us repeat again: "Love is the energy of a steadfast will bent on creating *fellowship*." Out of this is abundant life, freedom, enthusiasm, happiness.

Go thou and learn this one thing, without which all else is as "sounding brass and a clanging cymbal." This is the will of God made known in Christ, in his brave and gentle ministry, in his wise and moving message, in the unstinting spirit that poured itself out unto death to save us all—this is the will of God. Avoid it not, nor seek a substitute, no, not temples nor prayers nor purities. Love is the Christian law, and "*love is the energy of a steadfast will bent on creating fellowship.*"

"And I remember still

The words, and from whom they came,  
Not he that repeateth the name,  
But he that doeth the will!

“And Him evermore I behold  
Walking in Galilee,  
Through the cornfield’s waving gold,  
In hamlet, in wood, and in wold,  
By the shores of the Beautiful Sea.  
He toucheth the sightless eyes;  
Before Him the demons flee;  
To the dead He sayeth, ‘Arise!’  
To the living, ‘Follow me!’  
And that voice still soundeth on  
From the centuries that are gone,  
To the centuries that shall be!

“From all vain pomps and shows,  
From the pride that overflows,  
And the false conceits of men;  
From all the narrow rules  
And subtleties of Schools,  
And the craft of tongue and pen;  
Bewildered in its search,  
Bewildered with the cry:  
‘Lo, here! lo, there, the Church!’  
Poor, sad Humanity  
Through all the dust and heat  
Turns back with bleeding feet,  
By the weary road it came,  
Unto the simple thought  
By the great Master taught,  
And that remaineth still:  
Not he that repeateth the Name,  
But he that doeth the will!”<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> H. W. Longfellow, “Christus: A Mystery,” Finale. Used by permission of Houghton Mifflin Company, Publishers.

## REVELATION

### I

THERE is a persistent tendency in man jealously to cloister the religious truth he treasures, robbing it of liberty and locking it up in narrowness and mechanism. One would think that divine light was meant to be untrammelled enough, yet in no age has man been content to allow it to be so, but, on the contrary, he has sought to confine it within the small boundaries of creeds or institutions or priesthood or books. To be sure, he has thought to protect the light by thus putting a shell about it, and he has at first been able to see that the precious thing is the light and not the shell. Invariably, however, this distinction has grown dim with time, and the shell has come to be as sacred to him as the truth it was meant to guard, leaving him with the sacred nation, or the sacred church, or the sacred Book, issuing in the hard, exclusiveness of the Jew, of the Roman Catholic and of the Protestant.

Many fanatical Jews have died for their faith that in their chosen nation was deposited the truth while other peoples sat in darkness.

Many Roman Catholic martyrs have shown how deeply they believed that the voice of Holy Church was the highest religious authority possible. To-day many Protestants are ready to protest with equal energy that it is not the nation or the church but the Book which is the infallible and perfect authority in faith and morals. The tendency still works.

Each view has truth in it, or it could not have survived; its error lies in making all truth reside there. Who can read his Bible without feeling that God's glorious light has been concentrated in it as a burning-glass catches and focuses the rays of the sun? Yet how many there are who imagine they do the light honor by insisting that it shines here but nowhere else! A Roman Catholic or a Protestant, if told that he was cramping the truth would be shocked, pained, indignant; yet this is precisely what he tries to do. Instead of being universal and permanent as the sun, truth is made to be exceptional and intermittent as a lamp.

## II

Observe how vast is the conception of divine Revelation in the Prologue of the fourth Gospel: "There was the true light, even the light which lighteth every man, coming into

the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not."

1. God has revealed himself in the heart of every man; there are no boundaries of tribe or tongue; one feels the shadow of no temple, hears the leaves of no book. Direct as the rays of the sun he has shone upon all races, the white and the black and the yellow, the brown and the red.

2. This Light, this Life, is not merely universal; there is something about it which may be described as cosmic, as wrought into the warp and woof of the physical universe; this Life of God, which everywhere has touched the life of man, is the same creative thing that made the worlds—thus mighty are the forces that have touched man's heart. This cannot be gone into, but it indicates how impossible and how presumptuous it is to hope to enclose all this light in a church or in a Book.

3. This Light was Christ. Do not dismiss this as an anticlimax, but examine it. The whole idea of Jesus in the New Testament is that he was a limited expression of Something infinitely vast, a concise though not necessarily exhaustive epitome of a Divine library, upon whose face one could look and see the glory of God, and who could say, "He that



hath seen me hath seen the Father." The Light which has shone in "every man coming into the world"; which shone brighter among the Hebrews than among their contemporaries; which has shot golden rays through the ancient and the modern church, and which has bathed in beauteous and ever-ending splendor the pages of the Bible; the Light, moreover, which visited the sacred writers of India, which burned in the soul of Zoroaster and flashed from the soaring pinions of Plato—this timeless, universal Light burned deepest and warmest, flashed brightest and cleanest, was crowned kingliest and godliest, in Him of Galilee, Jesus Christ, our Lord.

He is the supreme revelation, in whose light all others should be tested. The light that shone through others came through the painted windows of personal blemish, tainting the golden glory; only in him were the windows crystal clear. This is not said by special pleading but by mere comparison: compare and see; He invites you. The challenge still remains: "Which of you convinceth me of sin?" Who else ever dared to issue a challenge like that, much less who else ever could survive it? If ever the Light has reached us uncolored, clean from God, it is through the inimitable windows of Christ,—windows

broadest spread in unparalleled genius, clearest wrought in unequalled religious comprehensions, and preserved unspotted in a miracle of moral cleanness and development.

He is the Light of the World, not because *from* him shines a Light which shines nowhere else, but because *through* and from him shines the true Light which shineth everywhere. But what filters through chinks and crannies in others, and mingles with shadows, in him comes flooding. He seemed to know it: "He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life."

Jesus, then, is the norm, the rule, the religious court of appeal before whom we bring our lesser light for disentanglement from error. We know he is the Truth, because our hearts answer to him. Truth is self-attesting. Like answers to like. In the great religions of the world resides much which is neither in agreement nor in conflict with Christ; about that we can suspend judgment. But all have features in agreement with Christ. Where they are in conflict with Christ, we say Christ is the greater Master.

### III

To all this most of us will readily assent; it is when application begins to be made that

revolt results. It is seen to be proper to test Buddha or Zoroaster thus, but Moses or David must be spared!

Yet Jesus himself did not hesitate to set his word above that of the Hebrew Scriptures: "It was said to them of old time, . . . an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth; but *I* say unto you. . . ." His followers have not always kept him so supreme; in anxiety for the authority of the whole of Scripture, fearing to allow that any part might be in error, many have been prepared to exhaust invention to prove it all of equal authority and exactness. When Abraham tells a falsehood, when Samuel hews "Agag in pieces before the Lord," when the psalmist, in vindictive mood, prays that even his enemy's prayer might be turned into sin, these unchristly things are glossed over and a pathetic attempt is made to justify them.

But if Christ is right, they are wrong, and we shall not exalt our Saviour or advance his cause by refusing to see it.

#### IV

There are two ways of speaking of the Bible to-day which seem to me to be equally unfortunate. One is: "I believe in it from cover to cover; I believe every word is inspired by

God and without error.” The other is: “There is a lot in the Bible that I can’t accept; I don’t believe it is all inspired; much of it has to be taken with a grain of salt, and that’s the way I take it.” If the first is mechanical and unreal, the second often savors of the flippant, and is no truer than the first. If the first has rigid ideas about this wonderful Book, the second often appears to have no ideas at all.

One almost blushes to have to mention a few elementary facts which, if only they were realized, would dismiss at once both the rigidity on the one hand and the flippancy on the other. The Bible is not a book, but a collection of books, written in far different centuries and by people of widely different ideas and experience. It is a library, in which is represented, not the dead level of a religious homily, but all the gorgeous variety of one of the most remarkable literatures extant. There is history, poetry, drama, allegory, narrative, folklore: as though one had turned to English literature and bound together in one volume *Paradise Lost*, *Hamlet*, *Green’s Short History of the English People*, *The Pilgrim’s Progress*, *Hymns Ancient and Modern*, *Stories of King Arthur*, the *Letters of F. W. Robertson*, and other writings. But there would be this difference: in the English collection there would

be no connecting theme, whereas in the Bible is the one sustained subject of religion. God has used every literary instrument and every kind of fact and, if you will, various sorts of fable, in order to reveal his light.

And that light has been like a gray dawn moving toward the perfect Day, which is Christ. What is to be gained by pretending that the light known to Moses or David was equal to that of Christ? or that all their opinions about God and human duty were correct? Either they are wrong, at times, or Christ is!

Yet again, and on the other hand, what is to be gained by saying that these old patriarchs were not inspired? The light they had was much superior to their times; if they are seen to have been in error when they are measured by Christ, they were not so when judged by the men and ideas of their own age; if in religion we see them to have been like babes trying to speak, and if their naïve ideas tempt our smile, yet they learned their language from the Father, though they had not the tongue to speak it with purity and without a lisp.

Can you tell all your heart to a child, or do you not, rather, impart it as the child is able to bear it? Thus did God, of necessity, deal with the children of men. If the psalmist is

vindictive, it is because of his passion for righteousness, a strange thing in his age—and whence came it? It was light, twilight, much mixed at times with human shadows. It did not come from below.

Let us admit the shadows; let us admit the light, for both are true. It is easy to be frank with ourselves since we have the bright day in Jesus; what disagrees with him is false; what fails to measure up to him is lacking, either in the Bible or out of it.

## V

But what agrees with him, inside the Bible *or out of it*, in past ages or in this, is the true light. For still the true light lighteth every man coming into the world. Some men are poor windows, others are better, and ever and anon arises one through whom the light streams wondrously. As the race climbs upward, and as men bring larger capacities and clearer windows, the light is sure to grow. What shall we say of those who speak as if God had ceased to reveal himself since the last word of the Bible was written? What a libel upon God! and what an ignoring of the plain facts of history! Where does the Bible condemn slavery? And yet when Wilberforce, and

Garrison, and Patrick Henry and Lincoln arise to free the slaves, we know it was by the light of God they did it. And then we see, what was hidden before, that this new light agrees with the Light of the World. Where does the Bible direct all nations to join together in abolishing war? Yet when Woodrow Wilson becomes the mouthpiece of a world and calls the nations to a better way, we know it is by new revelations of God that he did it, and by the same revelations that we desired it. Method and detail are accidental; the essential thing is the spirit of that great movement; we know it is right, because it agrees with the spirit of Christ.

And so God reveals himself as the centuries grow. In philosophies and sciences and customs and dreams; in the sins of men and in their virtues, always the light is growing. Things and thoughts new to the world are happening every day, God is active every day. The preacher proclaims some things never found in the Bible, and he knows they are of God because they testify of Christ. The philanthropist gives his strength to help a cause never dreamed of in Bible days, and he knows this vision of service is of God because it is such as Christ would have.

God's unfolding of the Light is not finished,

nor is the duty of man to keep the windows unshuttered heavenward. And ever we bring the new illuminations to Christ to find if they be of God. We know not from what quarter unexpected light may come, but unfearing—yet with discretion; with caution—yet with composure; we await all God has to offer by that Spirit of Truth which was promised as the Revealer of the things of Christ.



## IMMORTALITY

### I

WHEN anyone announces that man's survival of what we call death has never been proved my first impulse is to look at him in astonishment, but in a moment I understand him, and agree. I agree, because I realize that here is probably one of those who have not escaped from the stifling cage made for us by physical science, in which most of us have sat, like eagles with folded wings, eying wistfully through the bars the ample spaces that are our heritage, but being prevented from them by the artificial, narrow and yet arrogant proof-methods in vogue in some quarters. With a docility unworthy of our powers of wing we have accepted confinement, relinquishing the infinite horizons because, forsooth, they have not been proven to exist! Men who are still unescaped from this limited method of "proof" will of necessity tell you that immortality is not yet proved. For, of course, it is not proved by having been explored by the microscope, or by having been passed

through a prism broken up into rays and assessed, like the light, or by having been set out like a problem of figures, to be added, subtracted, multiplied, and divided until a mathematical result is achieved. But then, "nothing worthy proving can be proven, nor yet disproven"—not by these methods. The superficial matters of life can be captured by them, but not the deepest. Across, in fact, the very warp and woof of life must be written, "Not proven!"—not by these methods. Love has not been proven, nor thought, nor virtue, and certainly not life beyond the grave when we have not yet "proved" that man exists on this side of it. "I think, therefore I am!" cried the old philosopher, formulating testimony of his existence, and, though no one contests the soundness of his formula, whoever has yet been able to prove by actual demonstration, safe from illusion and superior to mere hearsay or personal opinion (1) what thinking is, (2) that he does indeed think, (3) that it necessarily follows that if he does think he also exists? And yet if we allow that man, if he is to know anything, must take some things for granted, we shall have allowed that which may open the way not only to belief in man's existence here but also to belief in his existence hereafter.

## II

For the grounds of the two beliefs, or, rather, of the one belief of our personal existence now, and of the persistence of it, are really much the same. Normal man is intensely conscious of his personality, and man has always and everywhere been so. But man has similarly been sure that death does not conquer personality. If it be retorted that some men have often doubted and denied the second, the reply is that men have often denied our present existence, and in both cases from an inquiry into the subject which has bewildered the eyes with accidentals whilst the essentials were lost. We analyze the body in vain for personality; we watch the body die, and doubts arise; we are ready to say that personality no longer exists, though we have not "proved" it to exist at any time. So we grow befuddled, and handle delicate truth with thick fingers that can never grasp it; and all the while the normal man knows better, though he does not pause to realize that he knows. He walks out of the jungles where the feet sink in uncertain foundations, where the stars cannot penetrate and where the cobwebs gather about the brain,—he walks out under the high heaven, upon the wide plain, and

feels the clean wind upon him, and in the simple joy of living he knows he cannot die.

“A certain presage,” Cicero calls it, but it is a presage insisted upon by all our knowledge of ourselves, and that knowledge is based upon man’s serene, unshaken consciousness that he himself is something superior to death. He has watched his body change from his youth up; but *he* has not changed, except to grow. Not a cell of his body is now the same as when he was a youth: he, in fact, wears a different body; but *he* is not different: the brain that was the vehicle of thought six months ago no longer lives, but the thought does, and uses another brain. Change and flux swing around him, he watches the rise and fall, the going and coming of many things, yet nothing touches him, he remains himself. He does not argue, he simply knows he lives. The well-nigh universal belief in a “future life” is nothing else than the refusal of personality to confine itself within the artificial boundaries of time and place.

Man feels himself to be independent of and superior to both. All his experience of time has been that he has conquered it, and if place has seemed to enchain him, he has been a monarch greater than his chains and only waiting to be freed. He carries in himself an instinct

of something unfulfilled. He feels he lives in fragments rather than in completeness, and that there is something he has either missed or not yet arrived at. There are moments when he glimpses fairer landscapes than he has ever walked, nobler devotions and nobler powers than he has ever known; it seems to be himself that he is glimpsing, yet ere he has properly decided what it is he sees, the fair prospect has gone, and he has eluded himself. When a storm raves on the ocean he watches the wild grandeur until he is exhilarated, as if it were a symbol of vaster powers within himself—and yet he is left saddened. When beauty spreads its wonders in the night, in the daytime unfolds its panorama of mountain, sea, and river, man gazes, loves it—but is left hungering for what no earthly scene has ever been able to give him. Why can “the meanest flower that blows” move the poet to “thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears”? We are aware of presences we cannot describe, of truth for which our language was not made. The soul seems to be aware of a country fairer than flowers, of domain wider than oceans, of nobility more regal than mountains. These outward scenes sadden with a feeling of restriction, and the higher they soar with wonder it is only to confess the plainer that

they cannot soar high enough to satisfy a man. Has this thing of life, called man, to falter in his step and "prove" to himself that he lives before he can believe that he does? And must he then proceed to debate whether he shall continue to live, suddenly distrusting the soul's affirmation, which a moment before he had found sufficient?

### III

Death is never so ridiculous as when a man gets beyond seventy. Physically he is in the autumn; nature is finished, tired, fruited. But spiritually he is at the spring. He is like a sown field over which a green hue speaks of hidden seeds sprouting toward harvests yet hidden in the deeps of the future. He is a hundred times more vigorous than when his mind lay fallow at eighteen. The area of his interests is enormously wider. The experiences of life have been stimulating until he is like a forest set in motion by the first warm call of spring, roots and buds and sap suddenly roused to a forward activity that nature does not intend to mock by checking. Shall he then say: "Now I am awake; now the roots of climbing worlds are struck; now there beat within me the strong pulses of the ocean; come,

let me surrender my treasures—to the dark abyss! and yield myself up with all my powers—to oblivion! Unto this end have I been prepared, nature's mightiest production, that I might, in a masquerade of dignity, exhibit on the stage—nature's hollowest farce! I am a majestic prelude to—everlasting silence! I am accumulated wealth about to be lavished on—annihilation”?

To all this the profoundest intuitions of healthy man rush up into protest and denial. “No!” they cry, “It is artificial, and it is false!” Yet, ask us to prove our right to protest and we cannot. As Emerson reminds us: “We cannot prove our faith by syllogisms. The argument refuses to form in the mind. A conclusion, an inference, a grand augury is ever hovering; but attempt to ground it and the reasons are all vanishing and inadequate.”<sup>1</sup>

#### IV

I place the emphasis here because here it belongs. If a man's assurance of immortality means anything more than words to him, it will be because he *knows* rather than because he *reasons*. It is not quite enough to say

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<sup>1</sup> “Immortality.”

some do not know, for that is doubtful. It is probably no more true than it would be to say some do not know they exist here and now. The African bushman and the Australian black fellow are low types that are in no way so self-aware as the more reflective among us: testimony of our very existence varies in intensity, therefore, but is never wholly absent. It is not remarkable that the same should be true with respect to our awareness of immortality. There are stages of spiritual civilization; one does not go to a drinking house or to a gambling den to seek burning premonitions of life eternal. Materialistic thinking and acting does not intensify such consciousness. While this great truth is not dependent upon our realization of it, *realization* is the master testimony to it. Where men live and think nobly there will consciousness of survival be cloudlessly affirmative.

## V

Therefore, if you would share the immortal hope, live greatly. But if you allow life's finer intensities to relax until there is not that in you which of itself is testimony, by what may you be convinced? When Orpheus plays his harp a hundred harps may surround him,



but only those whose strings are taut can catch the strain and answer it. The others with listless strings may be told that here is the master music of the world, but if they cannot know it for themselves, how shall it be proven? The music is all right but the strings need tightening!

When a gentleman announced to me with scorn that he would not trouble to cross the road to hear a certain famous botanist lecture on flowers I did not argue. Why should I? Where should I begin? If a man sees no beauty in flowers, can I convince him? What is beauty, that I should analyze it for him? All the evidence of a botanist would not suffice to capture beauty and give it to a soul that could not see it for itself.

We have our "evidences" for immortality, singly inadequate enough, but, taken together, capable of creating immense impressions upon some minds. But what shall we do? Shall we enumerate them to convince the unbelieving of the truth of immortality? Shall we speak, as Socrates did, of the indestructibility of matter and argue that if matter is unable to cease how much less the mind that, organizing and controlling it, ever proves itself superior and more worthy to live than the imperishable thing it handles? Shall we show

how, though we have seen trees and flesh reach maturity and pass it and seem ready to die, we have never found a mind do so, its powers appearing always to enlarge and renew? Coleridge left behind him about two hundred outlines of books that he had never had time to finish. We all do some such thing as this. We leave fragments of dreams, fragments of hopes, of love, of aspiration, of character, of religion: we live in fragments. Shall we ask whether the spirit which produces outlines so majestic can be prevented from somehow, somewhere carrying them to completion? Or shall we, rather, say that an unfinished column is all of God's plan for us, or a foundation without a building, or a lifted anchor without a voyage and a distant harbor?—Shall we say, with Dean Inge, "There is a life which is below consciousness and there may be a life above consciousness?"<sup>1</sup> Shall we reason from deep instincts and discontents of the soul, pre-saging life eternal, or shall we, perhaps, tell of the world's greatest in all ages being convinced of life beyond the grave, as they stand like mountains, and above them that Mount Everest, Jesus, catching already, the glories of the new day?

Any one of these roads, leading us to the veil

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<sup>1</sup> *Outspoken Essays*. First Series, p. 276.

of the great mystery, and leaving us there hoping but unseeing, might do little more than hold us for a few delicious moments ere we decided with sadly shaking head that no delectable country could possibly be beyond that veil, or *many* roads would lead to it. But when road after road converges to the same point and passes purposefully on, while we stand on this side of the mystery, watching, we begin to say: "One road might have been an accident; but so many—? What pulsing Fact lies beyond the veil that, like a magnet, draws thus so many highways to itself, setting upon each its pointing sign-posts with the legend, 'To the Life Immortal' "?

Of what value could such reasons be to one who has no witness in himself? They cannot convince. They might stimulate a sudden wish to share a conviction so desirable, but that would be very temporary unless life were aroused to become more reflective, devoted and responsible, for it is everyone who is "of the truth" who hears the "Voice." It is not on external botanical evidence alone but on internal artistic quality that flowers are loved; it is not the perfect music only, but the strings in tune to receive it that leave no need for argument, but, rather, make place for enthusiasm.

“The wish that of the living whole  
No life may fail beyond the grave,  
Derives it not from what we have  
The likest God within the soul?”

(“In Memoriam,” LV.)

## VI

Therefore I return, still again, to this: all of us know quite well that the wide sweep of our personality cannot be “cabined, cribbed, confined” within the narrow compass of time, that the real part of us is immune from “famine, fire, and sword.” All of us know it, but with some the consciousness is dim. It is not reasoning first, but living, that brightens the inward testimony. “If I but had your faith I should begin to live your life,” said a lady to Pascal. “Begin to live my life,” replied the great man, “and you will soon come to have my faith.”

As this assurance of the greater things grows it comes to be realized that if there is illusion and unreality anywhere, it is in the phenomena of this present world, including its passions and its pleasures. If anywhere there are mockery, intangibility, and “broken cisterns,” it is here, where too often the palate is tickled only that it might be nauseated, the feet allured that they might be bruised, the prizes

offered that they might break the heart. "Except a man be *born from above* he cannot see the kingdom of God." As Martineau stated it: "The very gate of entrance to religion, the moment of its new birth, is the discovery that *your gleaming ideal is the everlasting real.*"<sup>1</sup> Do not suppose that I have been dealing with mere hopes and dreams, slender-based, ethereal. These are the realities—if any are. These are the realities, and they reveal their secrets to the nobility, but never to baseness; they liberate the soul from the bondage of this world's complex and illusory masquerade, introducing it to the iron lines of permanence. These realities never disappoint; they never mock; but, on the contrary, in old age they reaffirm the immortal assurance of youth and prepare the soul for new beginnings.

Thus Theodore Parker, dying, was able to recite with deeper significance than ever the lines written by himself when young:

"Oh welcome, then, that hour that bids thee lie  
In anguish of thy last infirmity;  
Welcome the toss for ease, the gasp for air,  
The visage drawn, the Hippocratic stare;  
Welcome the darkening dream, the lost control,  
The sleep, the swoon, the *arousal of the Soul.*"

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<sup>1</sup> *Study of Religion*, vol. i, p. 12.

## THE KINGDOM OF GOD

### I

IN one of his Messianic flights Isaiah exclaims, "For that nation and kingdom that will not serve thee shall perish."

Yes; and we may add: "That international policy, that industrial legislation, that sociological doctrine that will not serve Christ shall perish; that league, or combine, or program that will not serve Christ shall perish; among the rich or the poor, the powerful or the weak, whether the plans be shaped at White House, or at the labor union, or at the board of directors, that which will not serve Christ shall perish."

With whatever "boast of heraldry" or "pomp of power," flourish of trumpets or weight of gold the plans may be framed and launched, we have lived now long enough to know, by the inexorable logic of plain events, that that which is not of Christ has already the worm at the roots, and that only that carries within itself the vigors of unquenchable life and triumph among men which is conceived in the spirit of Galilee.

For Christ it is who is referred to here, though Isaiah himself could hardly have known it. Isaiah could never have meant or dreamed that there lay in the arm of his people sufficient strength for all nations to feel it; he could not have felt confident that in the tribe known as Israel were the qualities bound to make all people serve it, or perish. Not in the tribe, nor in the arm of Israel, but in the presence of *God* in Israel was his hope. If God dwelt in Israel, the peoples would pay homage to the God who dwelt there, or ignore him at their peril. Isaiah was simply proclaiming the Messianic hope of his people. A strange hope it was, ancient, persistent, at first crude enough—being political and physical; steadily it shed its crudities as the years passed. The nation, trampled on, exiled, almost extinguished, yet clung with a tenacity that was surely inspired to the golden hope of a Deliverer to come, and a Kingdom that would extend unto the ends of the earth.

Yet by the time Jesus came there were many shades of popular opinion concerning the nature of the Kingdom, the vast majority being assured that a warlike prince was about to appear, gifted with an ability of leadership, sufficient to cast off the Roman tyranny and restore Israel to the glories of Solomon.

It is not hard for us to detect in many of our current doctrines of the Second Advent a survival of this old Jewish frame of mind.

In this the Jews had really sunk below the elevated expectations of some of their ancient prophets. A more spiritual view, however, seemed to have prevailed alongside the other, although it was by no means so prevalent. And Jesus completed the evolution of this long dream of a kingdom of God, continually resisting the materialistic view and insisting upon the spiritual. The kingdom of God, he stressed, is within, and unseen. Even his occasional use of picturesque and dramatic language must not be so interpreted as to make him seem to lapse at times into grosser conceptions; Jesus was too big to be inconsistent with himself, and the entire emphasis of his message was inward. Only too many of us possess a certain vulgar lust for pomp and display, and we shall not rest until we take our Lord and make him a King after the pattern of earth's little potentates, have him wear a crown of stars and, accompanied by a shining concourse of angels, have him overturn opposition by the conquering force of his mighty arm. In the days of his flesh, he was much grieved at his disciples' disposition to read physical meanings into his poetry, and



one can imagine the dismayed gasp of a John Bunyan or a John Milton should their high symbolism ever come to be treated with the dull literalism that has so often and so long perverted the teachings of our Lord.

The long dreams of a kingdom of God culminate and clarify in Jesus. "My kingdom is not of this world," he said; yet it is *in* this world. But the whole method and ideal of it are other than what we have come to know as worldly. Jesus is himself the symbol of his kingdom, representing in himself all the essentials of his kingdom. If I should seek to epitomize the marks of the kingdom of God, I think I should say they are Spirituality and Brotherhood—but these as Jesus represented them, for both have been so loosely used as to have become more or less emptied of their primal wealth.

## II

Spirituality is not a matter of temperament; there is a distinction between *spiritual* and *spirituelle*. It has no necessary connection with emotion, and not even with mysticism. Spirituality is a philosophy. It is opposed to materialism. A thing that could never be said of Jesus is that he was a materialist. Yet he was practical, active, constructive,

but as he went, he *saw!* He saw the hand of God, believed in the plans of God, felt the heart of God. The universe was not barren matter; human life was not orphaned, unvisited, unguided. Jesus was one whose hands were filled with the tasks of the day, but whose reading of life and things was discerning of spiritual presences and purposes; he counted God in, not pausing in the realms of theory, but actually. Thus he never suffered the corroding influences that always eat at the soul where materialism has settled.

And this attitude to life is vital to the kingdom of God. There is no hope for the world without spirituality—not the pseudo-religion that conventionally speaks the Divine Name, but never ponders its significance, that recognizes excellent sentiment but never shoulders responsibility. The religion that cannot direct behavior is not the kind that Jesus illustrated. But there is an apprehension of God that is warm and energizing; it is creative of new scales of value; it arouses new conceptions of human worth and destiny; it provokes new convictions that God is Governor, Nourisher, Redeemer. Moreover, it is not the product of a hermitage, or of a temperament, and it is open to the common man. Between it and materialism is the difference between life and

death. It is a philosophy of life and it is one of the essentials of the kingdom of God.

### III

The other mark of the Kingdom is Brotherhood—as Jesus showed it. It overleaped boundaries of nation and class and sect; the Samaritan and the Jew, the rich and the poor, the Pharisee and the peasant shared the unstinted heart of him. In such a spirit there are obvious implications of service; one of his most affecting lessons was that “the Son of man came not to be ministered unto but to minister.” Such a spirit does not necessitate a supine ignoring of ugly facts, for Jesus saw sin with open eyes; neither does it require a scrapping of all words that do not purr with softness and geniality, for the words of Jesus could be barbed with truth as with flint, and could leap from the taut indignation of his soul like arrows from the string. Nevertheless, his spirit was ever that of the brother of us all, and in no clash of principles, however violent, in no provoked criticism, however caustic, could that spirit in him be spoiled. And this is the spirit of the kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God, then, is not a shape, an institution, or anything to be handled, any more than the life which dwells in a tree. But

that plant life is the explanation of trunk and branch and leaf, and these can be handled. There is a living Spirit, which is the spirit of the kingdom of God, and only the presence of this spirit in the affairs of men can ever produce those institutions, laws, and prosperities which have been dreamed of from time immemorial as the Golden Age. When John saw the New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, there came "a great voice out of the throne saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men." Then all things began to be made new, and when John was shown the New Jerusalem in detail, again God and the Lamb were the center of all things, the Temple, the Light. What can one say but that about a center like that such glories are bound to group? Give us a right spirit, with all that that registers in change of mind and heart, and we shall not be long in creating right conditions.

The penury of the world is not from wicked economics but from poverty of soul, and when the soul is poor you cannot make conditions rich. The Romans hated kings as much as Americans do, and they boasted the liberties and benefits of their republic. Yet the later Roman republic abounded in tyrannies and travail, so little can a form of govern-

ment avail when the spirit of the people is wrong. God knows our world needs reforming; but there is not likely to be much reformation until we are relieved of the vast army of simple folks who think they can reform it from the outside instead of from within. The air is filled with the shouts of those who cry their wares, of those who offer their panaceas of all ills, guaranteed to disperse oppression and produce prosperity, happiness, and peace. The confidence of them! Republicans and Democrats; Bolsheviki and I. W. W.; Labor, Liberal, Conservative! A vast amount of propaganda is conducted to-day as if we should have a new world if only men had plenty of money without any work. Be not so deluded! I have seen an ignorant man inherit money and travel the world over and see nothing and enjoy nothing; so little do conditions compensate for lack of character. Says Ruskin in a well known line: "There is no wealth but life: life, including all its powers of love, of joy and of admiration. That country is the richest which nourishes the greatest number of noble and happy human beings." The common happiness and the common nobility—that, and that only, is the common wealth. But you will never get it by a reshuffling of the international or the economic or the indus-

trial situation. The need is deeper than that.

Because the spirit of modern life is wrong we are suffering a social system which grinds some men to powder. But let Labor smash the system and install another; what would we have except a new tyranny, unless Labor is animated by the spirit of brotherhood and is possessed of a spiritual conception of things? Neither Capital nor Labor is able to survive a frank test of the marks of the kingdom of God. Labor will chase a chimera so long as it misses the spirit of the Kingdom. It is not neglect of the church which is to be stressed, but neglect of *God*. Selfishness, commercialism, greed in rich or poor, in capital or labor, will never save the world. "By no political alchemy can you get golden conduct out of leaden instincts." Cæsar and Napoleon each created empires; Rienzi failed, from lack of worthy human material. The sculptor and the architect are crippled without substance suitable to their work. How are you going to build a new world out of humanity as we so often find it? Christ undertakes to set the material right, and that is to be done by us men accepting a right attitude to our Maker and also to one another. Thence are all nourishments and brotherhood. But apart from this is certain disappointment.

## IV

The church is no professor of economics, but it is a prophet of the kingdom of God, and it is an observer of human life. And this it can aver, "That nation and kingdom that will not serve Christ shall perish!" It does not hesitate to say it to Capital, which having ignored the spirit of spirituality and brotherhood has brought upon itself the raging waves of industrial unrest. It cannot withhold the same warning from Labor, which similarly missing too often a proper spirit, while achieving shorter hours and better conditions, threatens the very foundation of society and its own prosperity and existence with the rest. The only permanencies, constructive contributions, salvation, are those that express and carry the spirit of Christ. Observe the world to-day and see whether the things that redeem our hope be not those that make for healing and brotherhood.

The leaven of the Kingdom is very active. Distinguished labor leaders in America and Britain are Christian men; ministers are concerning themselves with the economic welfare of mankind; a new literature has come into being; new dreams are forming, new disgusts are burning—disgusts at crass selfishness in any class, at shallow panaceas that do not

cleanse the blood. Things are happening in our day which for excellence would have made our fathers gasp as at the incredible. Men with rough hands and rolled-up sleeves are feeling their way toward a healthier spirit; men with keen brains, others powerful in leadership, still others possessed of wealth and influence are throwing their weight toward creating a better, deeper spirit.

The spiritual view of things is returning, and that alone can nourish genuine brotherhood. Jesus was offered the kingdoms of the world if he would employ a method indorsed by men from time immemorial. Because he believed in God he turned from that tried but false way, and set out to conquer the world by a deeper method and a truer. He could never have dared this had he not believed in God, but this one belief is enough to enable any man to challenge the example of ages when it conflicts with what God stands for. The world that loses this sense of God loses the taste that can distinguish corrupt fruit from sound, and the daring that lays the ax to the root of the tree. There are men who are teaching our world to catch that spirit. Because Jesus believed in God he "endured the cross, despising the shame." Such belief enables any man to follow his vision in face of the worst that



men can do, and to save the world in spite of itself. And this is what many men are doing to-day. "The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal—till it was all leavened." Throughout the world the leaven worketh.

In the passionate midst of a great movement of reform I heard, some years ago, one of the most brilliant orators and most dauntless spirits produced by Australia, repeat to a vast audience some lines that may fittingly close our study. He had not long emerged from an operation which had become necessary partly as a result, it was thought, of his strenuous labors in the cause of righteousness, and when I saw him on this occasion, the most dividing force in the country, beloved and hated, a storm center and clearing the air like a storm, he limped onto the platform holding his side which had never properly healed. He is dead now, but the radiant message of spiritual vision and faith flung out that day by that golden voice and peerless spirit speaks to us here seven thousand miles away in distant America, as an example of the deathlessness of the word of hope and life. In the midst of antagonism and hate, these were his words:

“Can you see the great wheels turning?  
Can you see God’s lightning burning  
In the tireless dynamo?  
Can you catch the hum of power?  
Catch the keynote of the hour?  
As the cap of death is settled  
On the forehead of the foe!

“Wheels of destiny are turning;  
Fires of faith are hotly burning;  
God is on the giving hand;  
Giving courage to the fighter,  
Giving death-blows to the smiter,  
Giving leaders to our land,  
Who will keep the great wheels turning,  
Who will keep the white truth burning,  
Till the dread foe is consumed.

“When the foe falls prone forever,  
Heaven may know,  
Our earth can never  
Know, a greater shout of glory  
Than shall usher in the story:  
How the children, with their mothers,  
Sweethearts, fathers, friends and brothers,  
All are safe! O, Nations,  
Hear ye! From all evil!  
Faint hearts, cheer ye!  
God’s own hand these wheels are turning!  
God’s own heart this fire burning!  
The Eternal Dynamo!”

## PROGRESSIONAL

### I

THE church has always believed that Jesus meant something significant when he spoke of a Spirit about to be granted who should take of the things of Christ and show them unto us. In the book of Revelation we find that Spirit already active, speaking to the early church: "He that hath an ear let him hear what the Spirit saith."

There is peril in dullness of hearing. Cassandra poured her prophecies into ears that could not hear, but the warnings were true, and the noble towers of Ilium bowed their proud foreheads to the Greek. The Soothsayer warned Cæsar of his fatal day, the ides of March, but provoked only a smile from the great man. "The ides of March are come," Cæsar laughed as he passed to the Senate. "Ay, Cæsar, but not gone!" replied the Soothsayer, portentously. Cæsar could not hear, and ere that day was done Cæsar was dead. The voice had spoken, but there were ears that were holden. Wherever the Church of Jesus Christ has grown deaf to that Spirit

which tells of the things of Christ, a deadly *malaise* has fallen.

The Spirit speaks unto the churches, and some there be who deem they do him honor by shutting the ears and crying, as the familiar gospel song has it, "It was good for our fathers, and it's good enough for me!" It was good for our fathers, but he who has not advanced beyond the fathers, as *they* did beyond theirs, is like the father of Abraham who stayed in Haran and died there; he died in the land of his fathers, indeed, but his son went onward into a new world and a vast inheritance, carrying with him the best that his fathers had given. What man among us can believe at forty precisely as he did at fifteen? If he can, alas for him! Then the years have taught him nothing, the Spirit has spoken in vain; he may as well not have lived.

Yet your belief of to-day is not a break with the past but the crown of it. It is not a waxen model of a flower, man-made, artificial and unconvincing; it is the inevitable outblossoming of all the processes of your tree of life.

Can the church have in it the Spirit of life and truth, and yet not grow? Will you insist that I stand where Calvin stood? or Wesley? or another? I shall go further *because* they stood where they did, outgrowing them as all

things living must outgrow the past, the more when that past was vigorous in health.

Yet shall the blossom look down and despise the branch and trunk? Shall any man to-day forget that he simply blossoms upon the tree of the centuries and has no explanation of himself apart from the past? Writes H. H. Powers in the "Atlantic" for April, 1923: "Trust not the man who lightly turns his back upon the past. Trust, rather, him who comes not to destroy but to fulfill. Fulfillment means destruction just the same, but oh, such a different destruction!" Starlight might be destroyed by catastrophe to the stars, but it is destroyed every morning by the rising of the sun. The living Spirit in the church disspreads an increasing light of Christ, and unto the end of time, whether they like it or not, the children must resign, as inadequate, truth which was enough for the fathers.

The spirit of the forest moves in a tree with restless energy, and the tree grows stout of trunk and breaks into leaf and flower. It is never two seasons the same, and yet it is never essentially different. It is always a tree; the type remains. But so certainly as that spirit is the spirit of life the tree cannot be static. You cannot play under it as a boy and then return after many years to behold it again.

Though it is the same tree, it has altered with the seasons, and so have you. Go to the petrified forests if you would be sure of what you are to find. There, from year to year, is no change. With perfect security you can tell your friend what he is going to see. If you wish you may say: "My father roamed among these ancient forests, and he brought me to them when I was a boy. I recall how awed I was by their static grandeur. Here they have been from age to age. Neither frosts nor suns affect them; they defy the elements, and are unchanged yesterday, to-day and forever. Come, and behold something that is not fickle, not unsure." Verily, for what is less fickle and more assured than death! Of all the trees in the wildwood, only that tree or that branch is static which has lost its life, and these, men gather into ovens and they are burned.

The living Spirit, restless and vocal in the Church of the Lord Christ, is the very genius of change. Where any branch of the church loses its capacity to change, it abides for a while as a contrast and a warning, *and then falls.*

## II

Not least arresting among the Master's similes of the Kingdom was that when he said: "Therefore every scribe who hath been made

a disciple to the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is a householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old" (Matt. 13. 52). The striking element here is that any *scribe* should ever, under any circumstance or by any chance, bring forth out of his treasure anything *new*. One has only to understand the function and spirit of the Hebrew scribe to realize this. The work of the scribes was to make careful copies of the Hebrew Scriptures for distribution, and their work was greatly revered. Their order began with Ezra, who returned from the Babylonish exile to find the sacred writings scattered and, in part, destroyed. He had them reassembled, reproduced, and copied, the copyists becoming known as scribes. Thereafter the scribes continued to play an important rôle. Thus began the era of the scribe.

This era of the scribe had been preceded by that of the prophet, in every sense a far greater era. The prophets seldom wrote, and when they did, it was the message stirring in their hearts that they wrote, not the message that had stirred the heart of some distant ancestor, however great. If they quoted him, it was that they might indorse his word and apply it to their own age. The contrast between the two eras is great. That of the prophet rings

with daring challenge of wrong; it is original, progressive, passionate, living intensely in its own time; that of the scribe is bound to the past; it cannot be original because its business is to quote the fathers; it cannot be progressive because its business is to remain faithful to the measure of light possessed by a previous generation; it cannot be really passionate, because its business is not to think until the fire burns but, rather, to accept and to copy. The prophet was venturesome, independent; the scribe was cautious and a lover of precedent. When the prophet would strive for the kingdom of righteousness it was with invincible faith in the ever-living, ever-present God; therefore with an energy that was often fierce he would even overturn practice and convention, where such seemed obstructive, and carve new paths in the name of the Lord. But the scribe, worshiping the past, would reform his times by consulting the methods and messages of other generations, painfully copy down all the prophets had said, and, supposing there was nothing to be added, with flat and stale precision would publish the wonders that God wrought in the great yesterdays; but he would never start up with the inspired conviction that God is also the God of our to-days and our to-morrows. The prophet might not be so



exact, so precise, so safe, but he was more colorful, more dynamic.

Emerson<sup>1</sup> tells us how the world demands of us conformity to its customs and creeds. That is the type of the scribe—careful of conformity, regarding, scandalized and horrified, any breakaway from the rule. But Emerson, urging faithfulness to our own light and to our own God, adds: “He who would be a man must be a *non-conformist!*” That is somewhat the type of the prophet, who asked not what was the fashion, nor how the fathers phrased their faith, but, rather, what was true for themselves and their own times. “He who would gather immortal palms,” cries Emerson again, “must not be hindered by the name of goodness but must inquire if it be goodness.” Inquire! Explore! Your scribe does not explore—he accepts!

### III

Judaism, at the time of Christ, might almost be described as being scribe-cursed. “The law and the prophets” were read, learned, quoted, debated, and deferred to with a reverence which had degenerated into superstition. The teachableness that sits respectfully at the feet of the great days that are gone that it

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<sup>1</sup>Self-Reliance.

may add wisdom learned there to the wisdom taught by latest knowledge and experience was absent, and in its place sat the obduracy that makes the ancient a fetish, shuttering the mind to every voice that speaks not down the long, familiar aisles of the past, admitting no wisdom that is not hoary with years, and forgetting that it is out of the mouth of some new-born babe of knowledge that God sometimes ordains strength. Therefore that generation lacked largeness, virility, freshness, enthusiasm.

Into this world came Jesus, a new and wholesome experience. Unlike the rest, he spoke the truth as he saw it, even daring to alter "the law" where he had something better to offer. That is why they said "he taught as one having *authority*—not as the scribes." They quoted, he proclaimed. They went back to Moses, who lived in a different time from theirs and which knew not their problems. Jesus did not despise Moses, but neither did he pervert the worth of that great man by making him the dead end of progress; he could on occasion quote Moses with confidence because he had learned to quote the supreme authority of all—"the words which thou gavest me I have given unto them."

But Jesus felt no impulse to scorn the scribes,

except where they had hardened into something actively injurious. Instead, he could not have been unconscious of the value of their work, and it would seem from the parable we quoted that he was less inclined to alter their backward look than to *add to it* a forward. He said that the scribe, when he became a disciple of the kingdom of heaven, became as a householder preparing to minister to some wayfarer. From his stores the householder produces some well-known staple foods; also he brings forth some newer and improved. Isaiah ate wheat and so will this wayfarer, but advancement in cookery, say, will not be despised by him these centuries after Isaiah. So, Jesus seems to teach, the man who lived by rote, attached too closely to the past, confident only when he could fortify himself with precedent and example, on entering the kingdom of heaven becomes imbued with a larger spirit. Still retaining the essence of old truth, he discovers new. To feed the present age which, like a wayfarer, passes his door, knocking ere it goes, he will bring from his treasury "things *new and old*,"—new truth and old.

#### IV

Thus it became apparent that the kingdom of heaven was not to find its type in the scribe,

but in Jesus. It was to be a kingdom of enterprise, passion, originality, inspiration. "Milton, thou shouldest be living at this hour," wrote Wordsworth; in his youthful enthusiasm over the French Revolution, convinced that so splendid a lover of freedom as Milton could never be alive in any generation without having something excellent to say in humanity's cause, and something intensely suitable not only to the days of Cromwell but to any moment in which he should live. The scribe's conception of Milton, however, would, rather, be that he has completed his message, having nothing further to say, and certainly nothing new. To the scribe, however valiantly truth may have striven and prevailed in days long ago, we must not expect her to be audible now. Instead, we should reverence her tradition and rear statues to preserve the likeness of the pure, strong glory that was. From age to age men may look at that face, but they will ever see an expression that is the same. . . . But the Kingdom of which Christ is Lord does not regard truth as a statue, perfect in curve and poise, but static; rather, truth is as a Milton who is neither dead nor inactive, who, so long as it live, must speak. Glorifying in the achievements of truth in the past, the scribe *that hath been made a disciple of the*

*kingdom of heaven* invites truth to break silence in the present; he is prepared for the unexpected and to be surprised, not because truth is likely to be false to its own type, disappointing all we have been led to expect of it, but because not being like a statue, but, rather, like a living person, it changes its expression, adjusts itself, unfolds new deeps.

## V

Had this been better realized, there had been fewer panics in the church and fewer lapses into infidelity on the part of men because of new light. In the twentieth century, after the lessons that have crowded the generations and written themselves, one would have thought, as with a pen of iron upon the heart of humanity, we still have our heresy hunts, and still our attitude, too often, is not to "prove all things," and not to ask "Is it true?" but rather, "Has it the sanction of the past?" Distant fields look green and the far past seems strangely God-filled. But go back and stand with those giants of God whose words we love to quote to-day, see how few blades were then green after all. Watch those men straining to apprehend a God who seemed to speak all too uncertainly, and observe those

nourishers of the world stoned angrily with words plucked from the "fathers." The loneliest, the bravest, the divinest, but also the most hated and the most feared have in all ages been the prophets of the new day, in which men walk in new extensions of the old paths and speak, in new words, the old truth.

The world has ever stoned its prophets. But this occurs to one: What if they had been allowed their ministry? What if the world had not sawn Isaiah asunder, and struck the head from Paul? What if the flames had not silenced John Huss and Servetus and Latimer? The truth is living still, and marching still, "in spite of dungeon, fire, and sword," but is it quite as wondrous as it might have been? Suffer we nothing from this wholesale murdering of the saviours and leaders sent unto us? If we had welcomed and pondered the prophets of "the Christ that is to be," do you think we should have this absurd suspicion between religion and science? this imagination that faith flourishes best in the cradles of ignorance? this present international tangle? this fratricidal, internecine struggle? Socrates and Sir Thomas More, and all their kind—ah, we could not well spare such brains and spirits as those! What if the world had allowed them to give us all their message? Was it a

little thing to slay such men? We have suffered more than they—we are a thousand years behind the times!

## VI

But there is another side to this. The spirit of the kingdom is not a wanton wrecking of the past and a crazy worshiping of novelty. It is inevitable that religion be conservative; responsibility cannot afford to be harebrained. Having decided that Newton's theory of gravitation is probably correct, science is not likely to capitulate a theory that has done good service for years simply because Einstein challenges it. Yet science will listen to Einstein, and test his claim and accept it if it holds. This, we may hope, will become much more the spirit of religion, which has nothing to fear from frankness.

Howbeit, this modern jangle of new voices is not all made up of voices prophetic. At the behest of the latest unripe experiment or speculation must experiences of centuries decamp? We shall feed our wayfaring age upon poor fare if, without something better, we deny it the food proven through centuries of toil and sorrow to be good for the soul. Are the old words "God" and "Pardon,"

“Christ” and “Heaven,” “Prayer” and “Salvation” to yield simply because we have added “Evolution” and “Psychology,” “Astronomy” and “Eugenics,” “Geology” and “Sociology?” Long before Astronomy was telling us the marvels of the skies, those old words were bringing mysterious dawns to human darkness and teaching souls to range the universe in a new-found vastness. Long before Geology unfolded the story of the rocks, those old words were shaking the foundations of the world into spiritual dislocation and rearrangement. It is by these words that men have “stopped the mouths of lions . . .” that men have cried: “He brought me up also out of an horrible pit . . .” that men have died as Moody did, saying: “I see earth receding, heaven is opening, God is calling me!” or as did Beecher, eager for new worlds to conquer and saying, “Now comes the mystery!” Will you have us believe that suddenly all this has been discovered a blunder, a twilight mist that cannot abide the risen sun of new knowledge?

## VII

It will appear to you that this makes both the fascination and the difficulty of Christian work to-day. Sagacity, vision, acumen were never



more needed in companionship with religious devotion. The world will dare to think, whether the church dares or not, and unfortunately unless the church leads the way in conserving the treasures of the past, and inviting the treasures of the future, we shall simply find men scorning us and the past we hug too dearly, and embracing, without discrimination, the future which we suspect. In a world lost in a wilderness the church may yet become as a guiding pillar of cloud toward a Promised Land. But the task will be arduous, and not lacking in peril. Heart alone will not do it, nor brain alone. It will demand both, and tax them to the limit.

For that reason one can only regret something akin to tragedy whenever the church is compelled to accept for its ministers young men whose piety is beyond challenge but whose type is otherwise weak. We have not had too much education in religious emotionalism, but we must insist that it be experienced by men who are also capable of coolly using their brains unwarped by it. No devotional abandon can long compensate for insult to a world's intelligence, and the penny of our wisdom will be small pay for the ultimate pound of our foolishness. As has been said, "the way to make the next generation rife

with infidelity is to feed the present generation on credulity." Men of broad brows and keen eyes are necessary for the task we have in hand; they must also be able to stand upon their own feet, know their own heart and their own God, and behind lips that are framed in kindness there must be teeth able to set in firmness, so that the protests sure to be met from many excellent quarters will not dismay. Of such a build were the apostles and prophets of old.

When Greece was arming for the Trojan War it was insisted that young Achilles must be found. It was not Ulysses' display of glittering trinkets that revealed him as the warrior-hearted among the women, but the blue gleam of an unsheathed sword and the proud bravery of a crested helm. To such the spirit of the youth made eager answer, and Ulysses, observing, smiled and claimed him for the labors of a man.

The times are searching us out! They offer their beads and mirrors and laces, pretty playthings for the soft-spirited; but they are spreading before us also the strong steel of honor, of sacrifice, of enterprise, faith and endurance. The times are searching for men, and only the virile spirited will answer. In these days, so strenuous in matters of faith,

the work of Christ will be done by those who, knowing the stern entail of the long campaign, the hard knocks, the lonely vigils, are prepared to accept all in the holy name of him who said "I am—the Truth!" Men of such kind will follow him, although knowing the while that those who would slay them will think they do God service!





